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New Monotheistic Inscriptions and Fragments from Perge

Perge'den Yeni Monotheistik Yazıt ve Fragmanlar

Şenkal KİLECI *

Abstract: This article introduces 10 epigraphic documents found at Perge. Monotheistic inscriptions such as a graffiti (no. 1), *monogramma Christi* (no. 2-5), an inscription for a *presbyter* (no. 6), fragments of a dedication to God (no. 7), a tombstone (no. 8), and two fragments (no. 9-10) found in the Southern Church of Perge. Though most of these are dated to the Eastern Roman Imperial Period, the *monogramma* carved on architectural blocks and tombstone should be dated to between the IV-VIth centuries A.D. While the inscription no. 6 bears a new *presbyter* named Timotheos, with the fragmentary inscriptions in no. 7 a term - *protopresbyteros* - never attested both in Perge and in Pamphylia before is suggested.

Keywords: Perge, Monogramma Christi, Tombstone, Monotheism, Graffiti, Presbyter, Protopresbyter

Öz: Burada sunulan çalışmada Perge kentinde sürdürülen arkeolojik ve epigrafik çalışmalar sırasında bulunan toplamda 10 adet epigrafik belge tanıtılmaktadır. Bunlar arasında monoteistik inançlara ilişkin kent içinde bulunan graffiti (no. 1), *monogramma Christi* (no. 2-5), bir *presbyteros* için yazıt parçası (no. 6), Tanrıya sunulan bir adağa ilişkin yazıt parçaları (no. 7), bir mezar (no. 8) ve Güney Kilise'de bulunan iki yazıt parçası (no. 9-10) yer almaktadır. Bu eserler çoğunlukla Doğu Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi içerisine tarihlense de yapılar üzerinde betimlenen monogramlar ve mezar MS IV-VI. yüzyıllar arasına ait olmalıdırlar. 6 numaralı yazıt Timotheos adında yeni bir *presbyteros*'un varlığından söz ederken, 7 numaralı yazıt parçaları ile hem Perge kentinde hem de Pamphylia Bölgesi'nde daha önce kayıt altına alınmamış olan *protopresbyteros* terimi önerilmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Perge, Monogramma Christi, Mezar Taşı, Monoteizm, Grafiti, Presbyteros, Protopresbyteros

The history of Perge's Jewish and Christian era is known only from a few literary sources. The reason of the Paulus' visit of Perge, together with Ioannes and Barnabas, during his first missionary travel (45-49 A.D.), was the city's Jewish community¹. As is known, Paulus and his fellows weighed anchor from the port-city of Paphus in Cyprus and visited Perge twice. However, he preached on his second visit to the Jews in Perge after returning from Galatia². The other is in the *Notitiae episcopatum*, in which Perge is recorded in *Provincia Pamphyliae Secundae*³. Apart from these, a woman named Matrona⁴ is also known who lived during the Vth century

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¹ Fairchild 2013.

² Acts 13:13, 14:24-25.

³ le Quien 1740, 1013-1016; Hellenkemper & Hild 2004, 363; Lilie *et al.* 2013.

⁴ Matrona of Perge is a woman/daughter of a well-educated family. She was married to a man named Domitianus who is not from the lower class or common people. They have a daughter named Theodote. In addition, she was known to have attended Bassianos, the monastery of men, disguised as a eunuch and took her

A.D. She was born and raised in Perge. She moved to Constantinopolis and attended the monastery of Bassianos and a nunnery and served as an abbess.

In addition to these, there is epigraphic evidence from Choma and Aphrodisias that shows the presence of Jewish people that formerly lived in Perge. Two Jewish names are recorded in Choma, Mousaeus and Manossas, the Greek versions of the names Moses and Manasseh. Of these two, Mousaeus had a son who was Pergaeus, and a sculptor⁵. Also, the Jewish personal name Samuel was recorded from Aphrodisias, who was a *presbyter* who moved to Aphrodisias from Perge⁶. These names are significant evidence for the presence of Jewish and Christian people and community in Perge.

Among epigraphic studies conducted in Perge⁷ only a few monotheistic inscriptions have been published. The first epigraphical article belonging to the late era of Perge⁸ was published by Sencer Şahin in 2015 entitled: “*Spätrömisch-frühbyzantinische Inschriften aus Perge in Pamphylien*”. Apart from this significant study there are two further inscriptions⁹, one on a water-pipe that bears the following inscription: Θεοδώρου ἰλλου|στρίου. φῶς, ζωή [(property) of illustrious Theodoros. Light (and) life]. The other one is on a bronze weight, one side of the weight is incised with a Latin cross and the following inscription, θεοῦ χάρις (God’s grace), other side carries the monogram of Ioannes in an octagon.

This article introduces a graffiti, four *monogramma Christi*¹⁰ and five fragmentary inscriptions found in Perge.

1. Graffiti

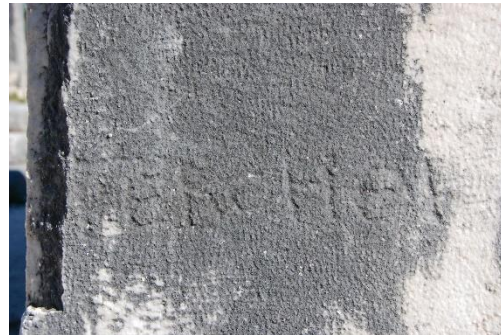
Marble block. This block is from the remains of Hadrian’s Gate.

Findspot: Behind and on the left column of Hadrian’s Gate.

Dimensions: H.: 1.54 m; W.: 0.77 m; D.: 0.73 m; LH.: 0.03-0.04 m.

Date: Late Roman - Eastern Roman Empire Period.

Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθι. Oh lord, help!



The word Κ(ύρι)ε is incised as **KE**¹¹.

place among the religious priests. For the life of Matrona of Perge see Sym. Met. 116; Talbot 1996, 13-64.

⁵ Bean & Harrison 1967, 43.

⁶ Reynolds & Tannenbaum 1987; Fairchild 2013, 55-57.

⁷ Epigraphical material from Perge were studied by the team led by Prof. Murat Arslan between 2016-2019 under the directorship of Antalya Museum. For the articles see Yılmaz 2016; Alten-Güler 2018; 2020a; 2020b; 2021; Alten-Güler & Kileci 2018; Tüner-Önen 2018; 2020; Kileci 2019; 2020; Tüner-Önen & Arslan 2019.

⁸ For structures and general information concerning the Christian era of Perge see Hellenkemper & Hild 2004, 361-372; Martini & Eschbach 2017.

⁹ Kara & Demirel 2015, 249-250; 2016, 354-356.

¹⁰ Monogramma Christi was created from the Greek initials of the name of Jesus Christ or just Christ when Christianity was not accepted as an official religion. This sign was used by the Christians to recognize each other. It can be seen on many artifacts, structures, bases etc. During the reign of Constantine these signs were clearly marked or carved on official buildings and struck on coins. It was also depicted on *Labarum* due to the dream of Constantine (Eus. VC I.29). The sign in question and its various variations started to be used from IInd century A.D., and it is stated that it became widespread by the IVth century A.D. For more see Akyürek-Şahin & Uzunoğlu 2018, 53-54.

¹¹ For other abbreviations, such as KE, K+E, K^sE, K_E, see Oikonomides 1974, 76.

2. Christogram

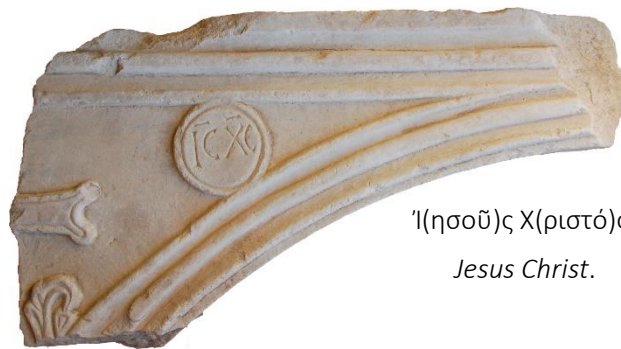
A left part of an arched block made of marble, broken at both lower, left and right sides. It bears three rows of line along upper front side and along the arch. On the left part of the block can be seen the right arm of a cross, below is a floral ornament. Between the rows of lines, where the front upper part and arch's part come close together is a circular relief roundel with a thin frame. Within the roundel is the Christogram in ancient Greek.

Findspot: According to the inventory number, it was found in the Macellum/Agora.

Inv. Nu.: E5.11.2013

Dimensions: H.: 0.51 m; W.: 0.87 m; D.: 0.12 m; Diameter of the roundel: 0.22 m; LH.: 0.04-0.05 m.

Date: After the IVth century A.D.



Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς Χ(ριστό)ς.
Jesus Christ.

3. Chi-Rho Monogram

Limestone. The monogram is incised on a lintel.

Findspot: On a left lintel of a door located on the Western Columned Street. The door is the second after the street on the left side.

Dimensions of the monogram: Diameter: 0.10 m; LH.: X= 0.03 P= 0.06 m.

Date: Eastern Roman Empire Period.

Χρ(ιστός). *Christ.*



4. Chi-Rho Monogram

Limestone. The monogram is incised on a lintel. The letter X (chi)'s arms are incised in a form of a triangle on both sides.

Findspot: On a left lintel of a door located on the Western Columned Street. The door is eighth door from the Caracalla Fountain.

Dimensions of the monogram: Diameter: 0.10 m; LH.: X= 0.03 P= 0.07 m.

Date: Eastern Roman Empire Period.

Χρ(ιστός) *Christ.*



5. Chi-Rho Monogram

An architectural block of marble. It has three *fasciae* ornamented with chaplets between one another. Lower part and the left part are well cut, but the upper and the right parts are broken and missing. The *monogramma Christi* is incised on the right side of the second *fascia*.

Findspot: Unknown. It is preserved today in the stone field near the stadium.

Inv. Nu.: –

Dimensions: H.: 0.41 m; W.: 1.22 m; D.: 0.22 m; LH.: 0.03 m.

Date: Monogram belongs to the IVth century A.D. or after; however, the block is of an earlier date.



Χρ(ιστός)
Christ.

6. Presbyter Timotheos

Four pieces of ornamented and moulded marble plaque fragments. This carries a line of inscription, which most probably has missing parts on the right side. The letter sigma is carved as an angled C.

Findspot: The Southern Church near the Agora, southern transept G16-T20. Preserved in the depot 10 box 156.

Inv. Nu.: –

Dimensions: H.: 0.25 m; W.: 0.75 m; D.: 0.04 m; LH.: 0.025-0.03 m.

Date: V-VIth century A.D. (from the lettering).



[– – –] ΤΕΙ μνήμης Τιμοθέου πρεσβ(υτέρου)· ε[ύχ]η Νεστορ[ος – – ?]

[...in?] memory of presbyter Timotheos, prayer of Nestor ...

Timotheos (honourer of God) is a theophoric name. This name was used throughout the Mediterranean even before the Christianity¹². This name is given to Christian men quite often in

¹² For the records see *LGPN* I-V.

Lykaonia¹³, and is also known from Galatia and Phrygia¹⁴. When it comes to Perge, it is attested before in Lyrbeton Kome¹⁵. However, this is the first record regarding the church.

At the end of the line is carved ΝΕΣΤΟΡ, which belongs to the name Nestor (Νέστωρ), Nestorianos (Νεστοριανός) or Nestoriane (Νεστοριανή). According to the record of S. Şahin (2015, 180, no. 6), the name Nestor is known from a marble plaque found in the *caldarium* of the Southern Bath in Perge, which is dated to the V-VIth centuries A.D.

7. Fragments of a Dedication Inscription

Four inscription fragments carved in marble. All found in G16-T23 of the Northern Transept (Southern Church). The lettering is also the same. Fragment A has curves on both sides, front and rear, and is broken on the right and left sides. Its top is cut flat. Fragment B is the smallest and carries two letters with a sign of a possible *epsilon* (ε). Fragment C carries three letters. Fragment D is the rightmost part of the inscription. It carries four letters and a cross. The left side of the block is broken and missing while the right side is cut flat. There is a hole on top with lead in it. The letter *sigma* is in lunar shape as C, *omega* is like that in minuscule form. *Theta* bears a whole bar which is a little higher than the center.

Findspot: G16-T23 Northern Transept (Southern Church). The pieces are preserved in depot 10 box 114.

Inv. Nu.: –

Dimensions:

- a) H.: 0.135 m; W.: 0.20 m; D.: 0.24; LH.: 0.02-0.025 m.
- b) H.: 0.055 m; W.: 0.085 m; D.: 0.035 m; LH.: 0.025-0.03 m.
- c) H.: 0.06 m; W.: 0.125 m; D.: 0.08 m; LH.: 0.03 m.
- d) H.: 0.135 m; W.: 0.225 m; D.: 0.235 m; LH.: 0.03 m.

Date: IV-VIth century A.D. (according to lettering).

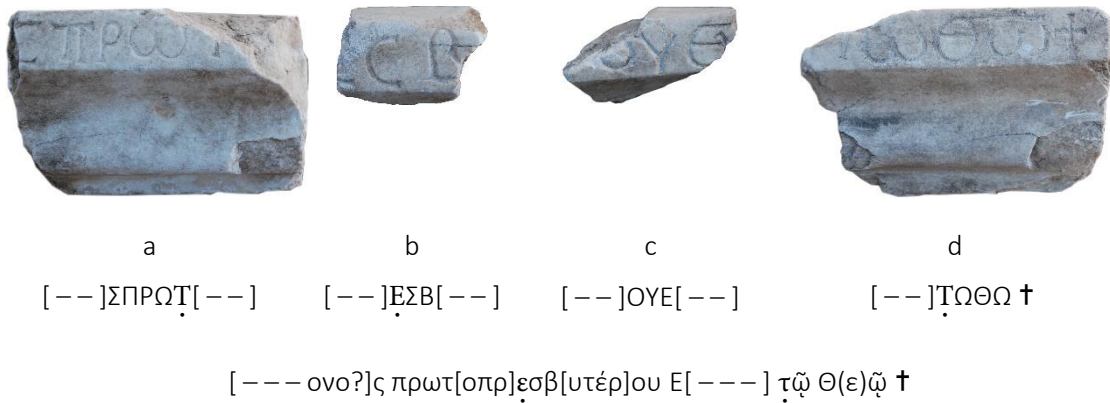


Fig. a-b-c: The first three fragments possibly build the word πρωτ[οπρ]εσβ[υτέρ]ου, which means “first presbyter”. Though their function is unclear, it is considered, as they are the “first presbyters”, they should be between the bishop and the elders. *Protopresbyteroi* are mostly known from the neighbouring of Pisidian, Phrygian and Galatian settlements since the IVth cen-

¹³ Breytenbach & Zimmermann 2017, 697.

¹⁴ ICG 23, 68, 184, 260, 262, 423, 785, 828, 1660, 3917.

¹⁵ I. Perge 76, 78, 421.

tury A.D.¹⁶. There are also some records from Lykaonia, Caria and Cilicia, and one record from Paphlagonia and one from Aiolia¹⁷. This inscription is significant because of the fact that the term *protopresbyteros* suggested here is attested for the first time in both, Perge and Pamphylia.

The letter sigma at the very beginning of the fragment a, maybe, belongs to a name written in *caso genetivo*, ending with -ovoc, in *caso nominativo* with -ων.

Frg. d: $\overline{\Theta\omega}$ lapis. It reads $\tau\tilde{\omega}$ $\Theta(\epsilon)\tilde{\omega}$. This part signifies that this inscription is dedicated to God.

8. A Fragment of an Epitaph

Marble epitaph that bears seven lines of ancient Greek inscription. The left and right parts are broken and missing. It can easily be seen that the stone also carries the right vertical line of a *tabula ansata* with another inscription carved in its right ear. Inside the ear of the *tabula ansata* is carved a five-lined-inscription, the letters carved under each other.

Findspot: Eastern columned street.

Inv. Nu.: JC'18 Kuzey Portik T52.

Dimensions: H.: 0.275 m; W.: 0.195 m; D.: 0.04 m; LH.: 0.025 m.

Date: IV-VIth century A.D.

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|----|
| | [-----] ζῶν κατεσ- | |
| 2 | [κεύασεν ἑα]υτῷ καὶ τῇ | |
| | [γυναικί καὶ τοῖς ἐ]ξ αὐτῶν | Έ |
| 4 | [τέκνοις μόνοις]· ἐτέρῳ δὲ | ν |
| | [οὐδενὶ --- εἰ δ]έ τις ἔξω- | Θ. |
| 6 | [τικὸν βαλῖ, ἔξει] τὴν κρί- | ε |
| | [σιν πρὸς τὸν Θεό]ν. ^{vac.} | ῶ |



[N.n. son of n.n.] while alive set this (epitaph) for himself, his wife and only for their own children. No one else [is allowed(?)]. If anyone put (someone) foreign, will render an account to God. In God!

LL. 1-2: The missing part should contain the name of the one who set the epitaph, probably with the father's name. Because of the obvious parts (ἑα]υτῷ καὶ τῇ) in the second line, it was set up by a man. See also comment LL. 3-4.

The three letters at the end of the line 1 "ΤΕΣ" are carved one within the other. This part should be completed in the second line as either κατεσκεύασεν or κατεσκεύασα. Considering the inscriptions found in Perge, κατεσκεύασεν is mostly used. In nine inscriptions κατεσκεύασεν

¹⁶ Breytenbach & Zimmerman 2017, 607.

¹⁷ In **Lykaonia**: for the epitaphs of Primus and Aphthonios in Laodicea Combusta see *ICG* 235, 554; *MAMA* VII 88-89. In **Galatia**: for the structure dedication of Theoktistes in Pessinous see *ICG* 2310; *I.Pessinous* 40; for an anonymous epitaph found in Ancyra see *ICG* 3718; for the epitaphs of Elpidios, Paulos, and Georgis see *RECAM* II 427, 430, 449. In **Phrygia**: for the building inscription of Menas found in Akmonia see *ICG* 1443. In **Caria**: for the fragment from Sinuri see Robert 1945, 7 no. 1; for the epitaph of Hesykhios found in Iasos see *I.Iasos* 419. In **Cilicia**: for the epitaphs see *I.Clicie* 95; *MAMA* III 506, 670. In **Paphlagonia**: for *thesis* of Eusebes the *protopresbyteros* see *I.Sinope* 193. In **Aiolia**: for the inscription found in Yumurtaada Adası see *I.Adramytteion* 32.

is seen with ζῶν, in three inscriptions with κατεσκεύασα¹⁸. What comes after this verb signifies mostly the words for the grave or tomb, such as ἀνγείον, κενοτάφιον, μνημεῖον, σορός. Apart from these words there are also κοιτών (*resting place*) and its diminutive version κοιτώνιον, which have not been attested before at Perge¹⁹.

LL. 3-4: Regarding the article τῇ, this part is either γυναικὶ or συμβιβῶ.

The saying τοῖς ἐξ αὐτῶν | τέκνοις μόνοις is very common among the epitaphs of Perge²⁰.

LL. 4-5: The initial of ἐτέρω is forgotten and inserted later within the letters Σ and Τ. These lines emphasize the prohibition of burying someone else in the grave. Among the inscriptions in Perge only ἐτέρω δὲ οὐδενὶ ἐξὸν ἔστε ἕτερον πτώμα ἐπιβάλε and ἐτέρω δὲ οὐδενὶ ἔξεστιν ἐπιβαλῖν ἀλλότριον πτώμα sentences are used. Seeing these, it is understood that those lines contain another version of these sentences, or perhaps it may basically be: ἐτέρω δὲ [οὐδενὶ ἔξεστι] or versions.

LL. 5-8: Though for the part "...δ]έ τις ἐξω..." either ἐὰν δέ τις ἐξωτικὸν πτώμα βάλη or ἐὰν δέ τις ἐξωτικὸν νεκρὸν θεῖναι ἐπιχειρήσῃ²¹ can be suggested, these sentences are far too long for this inscription. The sentence suggested for this part is taken from a Christian inscription found in Laodicea Combusta²².

When it comes to epitaphs of Christians or Jews the judgement is done by God. As is recorded in the Bible: "for God himself will bring every sort of work into the judgment in relation to every hidden thing, as to whether it is good or bad"²³. Which is why mostly these three sentences are found on epitaphs²⁴:

- 1) ἔξη τὴν κρίσιν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν = let her/him be judged before God.
- 2) δώσει λόγον τῷ Θεῷ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ κρίσεως = one will render an account to God on the judgement day.
- 3) δώσει τῷ Θεῷ λόγον τῷ μέλλοντι κρεῖνεν ζῶντας κὲ νεκρούς = one will render account to God who judges the livings and the dead.

In the holy texts there also the related saying δώσει τῷ Θεῷ λόγον = *one will render an account to God*²⁵. The suggestion made in this epitaph relates to an inscription found in Nicomedeia²⁶. There is εὐλογία πᾶσιν = *a blessing for everyone* after the sentence, which is considered as may be related to Judaism²⁷.

Inside the right ear of the *tabula ansata* is written ἐν Θεῷ. This expression is a prayer for the deceased to find an eternal and happy life in the presence of God in the Christian faith. Generally, it is seen with the verb "live"²⁸.

9. A Fragmentary Inscription

A profile block of limestone. The top of the block is carved flat. On the moulding is a fragmen-

¹⁸ I.Perge 357, 372, 391, 416, 418, 440, 445, 447 cf. I.Perge 448-449, 458.

¹⁹ E.g. Petzl 2019, Cat. 692.

²⁰ I.Perge 368, 372, 419, 446-447.

²¹ Smyrna 423; TAM V,2 1311.

²² MAMA I 167.

²³ Eccl. 12:1: "ὅτι σὺν πᾶν τὸ ποίημα ὁ θεὸς ἄξει ἐν κρίσει ἐν παντὶ παρεωραμένῳ, ἐὰν ἀγαθὸν καὶ ἐὰν πονηρόν". See also 2. Corinth. 5:10; I. Petrus 4:5.




²⁴ Johnson 1995, 32 no. 1.22; 150 no. 4.17-18.

²⁵ Romans 14:12.

²⁶ Johnson 1995, 32 no. 1.22.

²⁷ For the discussions see Robert 1960, 394 dn. 4-5; Johnson 1995, 33 dn. 17.

²⁸ Marucchi 1912, 88 vdd.; ICG 3015-3018.

tary inscription, and below this are two *cymae* which makes the shape semicircular. The right and left parts are broken and missing. The lettering is calligraphic. *Omega* has horns on top as , *theta* seems like omega with a bar inside as , and *eta* has two spiral bars that turns around each other as .

Findspot: Unknown. It is preserved in depot 8/9.

Inv. Nu.: (Artifact number) 27.

Dimensions: H.: 0.125 m; W.: 0.275 m; D.: 0.105 m; LH.: 0.03 m.

Date: Eastern Roman Empire Period.



[---]β^ρο^τηθῶ[ν ---]

... (one who) helps ...

ΒΩΗΘΩ[N] *lapis*. [εἷς θεὸς ὁ] βοηθῶ[ν τῷ δεῖνι] can be suggested according to an inscription found in Iuliopolis, Galatia²⁹.

10. Fragmentary Inscription

Marble. Rear, left and bottom parts are broken and missing. Top is cut flat. The moulding carries three letters of an inscription. The letter *omega* resembles a horseshoe.

Findspot: G16-T23 Northern Transept (Southern Church). It is preserved in depot 10 box 144.

Inv. Nu.: –

Dimensions: H.: 0.065 m; W.: 0.14 m; D.: 0.12 m; LH.: 0.02 m.

Date: Eastern Roman Empire Period.



[--]ΑΜΩΝ[--]

²⁹ ICG 2431: εἷς θε[ός] | ὁ βοηθῶν | Θεοδότῳ | τῷ ἐπισκό[πῳ].

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