

Issue XII (2026)

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Fatih YILMAZ

 0000-0002-5820-3754

Hacer SANCAKTAR

 0000-0003-3268-7890



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Citation Yılmaz F. & Sancaktar H. 2026, "A New Inscribed Bronze Bowl Dedicated to Megale Thea Demeter from Arykanda". *Libri* XII, 49-65. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.21134137

Received: 19.05.2026 | Accepted: 24.06.2026

Available: 11.07.2026

Type: Research Article

Editing: Phaselis Research Project
www.libridergi.org



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LIBRI
LIBRI XII (2026) 49-65
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www.libridergi.org

A New Inscribed Bronze Bowl Dedicated to Megale Thea Demeter from Arykanda

Arykanda'dan Megale Thea Demeter için Yazıtlı Yeni bir Bronz Kap Adağı

Fatih YILMAZ* Hacer SANCAKTAR**

Abstract: This article presents an inscribed bronze votive bowl discovered in 2019 within a building complex associated with the Sebasteion (Room M5) at the acropolis of Arykanda. The multifunctional nature of the building complex, along with the associated finds, indicates that the area served as a hybrid space where ritual practices and daily life intertwined. Dating to the 2nd-3rd centuries CE, the inscribed bowl provides the only evidence to date of the goddess Demeter in the city's *pantheon*. The bowl extends the geographical distribution of the cult of Demeter in Lycia eastward and into the interior. The incised inscription on the bowl bears the epithet Megale Thea (Great Goddess), hitherto unattested for Demeter in Lycia. This epithet reflects the rhetoric of religious exaltation prevalent in Roman Imperial Asia Minor. The dedicator, Theo[d]amos, identifies himself as an oikonomos (steward/administrator), suggesting he may have been an official attached to either the city or a cult organisation.

Keywords: Arykanda, Demeter, Megale Thea, Bronze Bowl, Oikonomos

Öz: Makale, 2019 yılında Arykanda akropolisinde, Sebasteion'a bağlı bir yapı kompleksinde (M5 No.lu mekân) keşfedilen yazıtlı bronz bir adak kabını tanıtmaktadır. Yapı kompleksinin çok işlevli doğası, ele geçen buluntularla birlikte, alanın ritüel pratikler ile günlük yaşamın iç içe geçtiği hibrit bir mekân olarak hizmet verdiğini göstermektedir. MS 2.-3. yüzyıllara tarihlenen yazıtlı kap, kent *pantheon*unda tanrıça Demeter'e ilişkin şimdiye dek bilinen tek belgeyi sağlamaktadır. Kap, Demeter kültürünün Lykia'daki coğrafi dağılımını doğruya ve iç kesimlere doğru genişletmektedir. Kapın üzerine işlenmiş yazıt, Lykia'da Demeter için bugüne dek tespit edilmemiş Megale Thea (Büyük Tanrıça) epitetini taşımaktadır. Bu epitet, Roma İmparatorluk Dönemi Anadolu'sunda yaygın olan dinsel yüceltme retorikini yansıtmaktadır. Adağı sunan Theo[d]amos, kendisini bir oikonomos (kâhya/idareci) olarak tanımlamakta ve bu durum şahsın ya kente ya da kült örgütüne bağlı bir görevli olabileceğini düşündürmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Arykanda, Demeter, Megale Thea, Bronz Kap, Oikonomos

Introduction

During the 2019 excavations at the acropolis of Arykanda, an inscribed bronze bowl dedicated to the goddess Demeter (Env. No. Ary 2019-M2167) was discovered. Six fragments of the bowl were found in the fill layer (level 841.10 m) of the final-use phase of Room M5 (3.17 x 9.41 m) within a building complex (Figs. 1-2). The complex, measuring 14.35 x 26.06 m and consisting

* Res. Asst. Dr., Akdeniz University, Department of Ancient Languages and Cultures, Antalya, Türkiye. fatihyilmaz@akdeniz.edu.tr | 0000-0002-5820-3754

** Assoc. Prof., Yozgat Bozok University, Department of Archaeology, Yozgat, Türkiye. hacer.sancaktar@yobu.edu.tr | 0000-0003-3268-7890

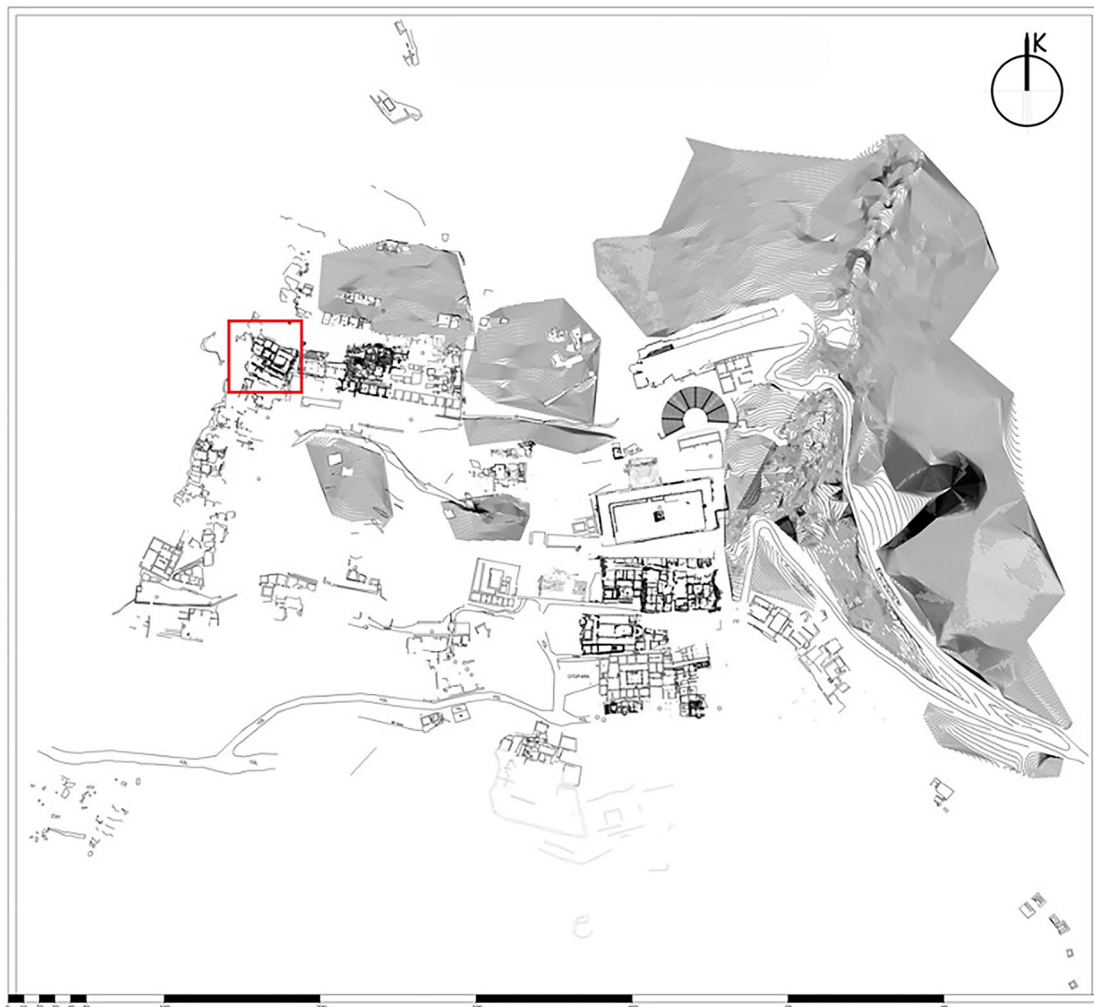


Fig. 1. The Sebasteion and the building complex on the city plan of Arykanda (Excavation Archive)

of six rooms (M1–M6)¹ built on two terraces, is directly connected to the Sebasteion², which was previously identified as dedicated to Septimius Severus and his family by an inscribed architrave³. The location of the structure, interpreted as a priest's residence and situated adjacent to the Sebasteion, together with the composition of the finds, indicates that the building served not only as a residence but also as a locus for ritual practices and priestly activities. Especially in

¹ The six rooms that make up the building complex are as follows: M1, 2.8 x 7.13 m; M2, 6.30 x 6.98 m; M3, 4.33 x 5.01 m; M4, 4.14 x 4.96 m; M5, 3.17 x 9.41 m; M6, 5.20 x 6.80 m. For information on the priest-building complex in Sebasteion, see Tekinalp *et al.* 2019, 90; Tekinalp & Sancaktar 2022, 598. On the residences at the acropolis, see Bayburtluoğlu 2003, 141; Gürgezoğlu 2006.

² For the architecture of the Sebasteion, see Sancaktar 2019, 56.

³ This structure is referred to as the Sebasteion, through inscribed architrave fragments with a total length of approximately 4.50 m, see also *I. Arykanda* 18: Αὐτοκράτορι Κα[ίσαρι Λ. Σεπ]τιμί[ω] Σεσή[ρω] Περτίνακι καὶ Μάρκω Αὐρηλίω Ἀντωνεῖν[ω Σε]βα[στοῖς] [καὶ Π. Σεπτιμῖω Γέτα Καίσαρι]] καὶ Ἰουλίᾳ Σεβαστῇ [μητρὶ κάστρων] | vac. καὶ τῇ γλυκυτάτῃ πατρίδι vac. | Ἀρχέπολ[ις τοῦ δαῖνος — — — κατ]ασκεύασας [— — — ?ἀνέθηκ]ε καὶ τὰ περὶ αὐτ[ῆ?] χρή[ματα ?σὺν τοῖς] ἐν αὐτ[ῆ?] — — — | vac. Ἀπε[— —]νος Ἐμβρόμ[ου vac.] | [— — —]NN[— — —] | [— — —]ΘHN[— — —].

rooms M1-M3, the small sculptures, figurines, and votive objects, together with materials associated with purification or sacrifice rituals, suggest that these spaces were used for cult practices⁴. In contrast, the daily-use and storage vessels identified in other rooms indicate a deliberate functional differentiation within the building complex. In the fill of Room M5, where the fragments of the bowl dedicated to Demeter were found, a bronze coin struck by the city of Arykanda in the name of Tranquillina (241–244 CE)⁵, wife of Gordian III, a marble mastoid weight, and an iron knife were also unearthed. This assemblage provides important data concerning the chronological framework and the purpose of the room in question.

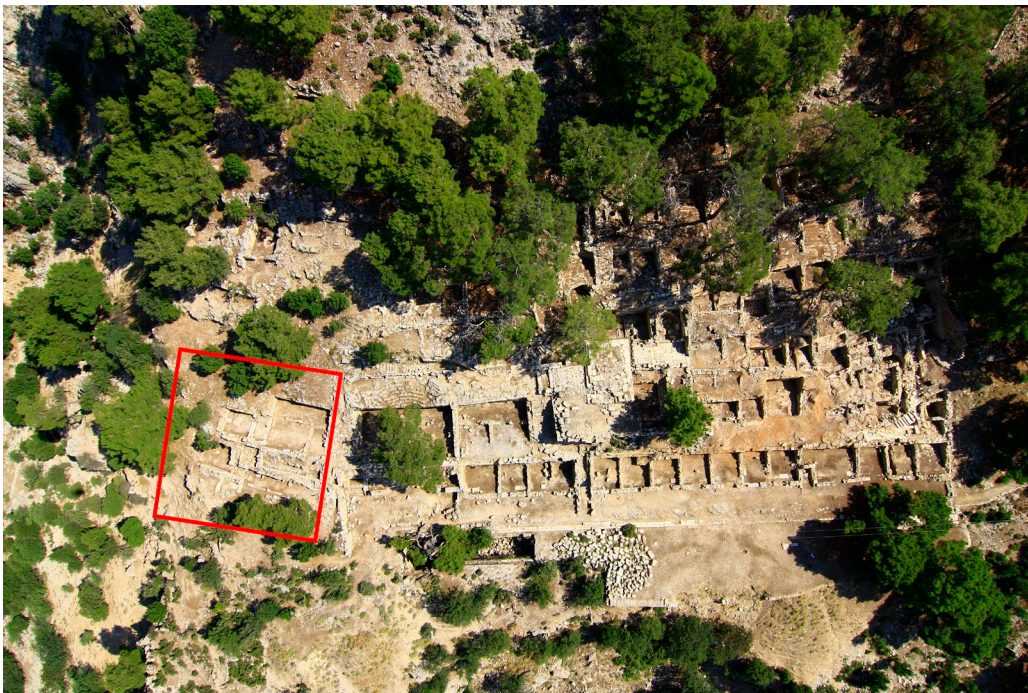


Fig. 2. Aerial photograph of the Sebasteion and the building complex (Excavation Archive)

The bronze bowl itself warrants consideration within the broader votive traditions of the Greek and Roman worlds, where metal vessels, and *phialai* in particular, functioned not merely as containers but as materially and sensorially meaningful objects mediating between the dedicant and the divine⁶. Read within this tradition, the bowl from Arykanda should be understood not simply as an inscribed artifact, but as a ritual object whose material form, context, and text together illuminate the local character of the Demeter cult and the material constitution of religious identity in Roman Lycia.

⁴ For the finds related to the cult obtained from the excavations at the acropolis, see Tekinalp & Sancaktar 2022, 592 Fig. 10.

⁵ Obverse: CABEINIA TP ANKYΛΛEINA; Tranquillina's draped bust faces right, with a crescent on her shoulders. Reverse: APYKAN-ΔEΩN; Faces right, perched on a broken wild boar's head with open wings, an eagle facing front, head turned to the right (*Hans v. Aul. Lykien*, No. 51-53; *RPC VII.2*, No. 2293). Æ 20.69g 31.7mm 12. Findspot: Akr 6 (M5) Level 841,073 Sr: 2162 X: 7.70 Y: 0.40, Excavation Env. No: Ary 2019-2168 (Sancaktar 2023, 32 cat. no. 22).

⁶ Gaifman 2018, 445-462.



Fig. 3. Plan of the Sebasteion and the priest's residence (Excavation Archive)

Contextual and Spatial Analysis of the Findspot

The building complex containing the bronze bowl comprises six rooms (M1–M6) associated with two east–west oriented temples. The close spatial relationship with the temples and the nature of the finds indicate, as noted above, that the area did not serve solely as a residence but rather as a semi-public space intertwined with ritual activities (Figs. 3-4).

Recent research has shown that the imperial cult was articulated not as a practice confined to monumental structures such as the Sebasteion (/Augusteum) but as a symbolic field reproduced through negotiation with local religious traditions⁷. This resonates with a wider body of scholarship that has problematised the rigid demarcation between public and private religious spheres⁸. Accordingly, religious practices became manifest in houses, priestly structures, and semi-private spaces through material culture⁹; figurines, votive objects, and portable cult equipment are regarded not merely as reflections of belief systems but as active elements in the construction of religious identity¹⁰. Therefore, placing a phiale or similar bowl in a specific

⁷ Parker 2015, 71.

⁸ Rüpke 2007, 1-9; Raja & Rüpke 2015, 1-26.

⁹ van Andringa 2015, 29.

¹⁰ Rebillard 2015, 427.

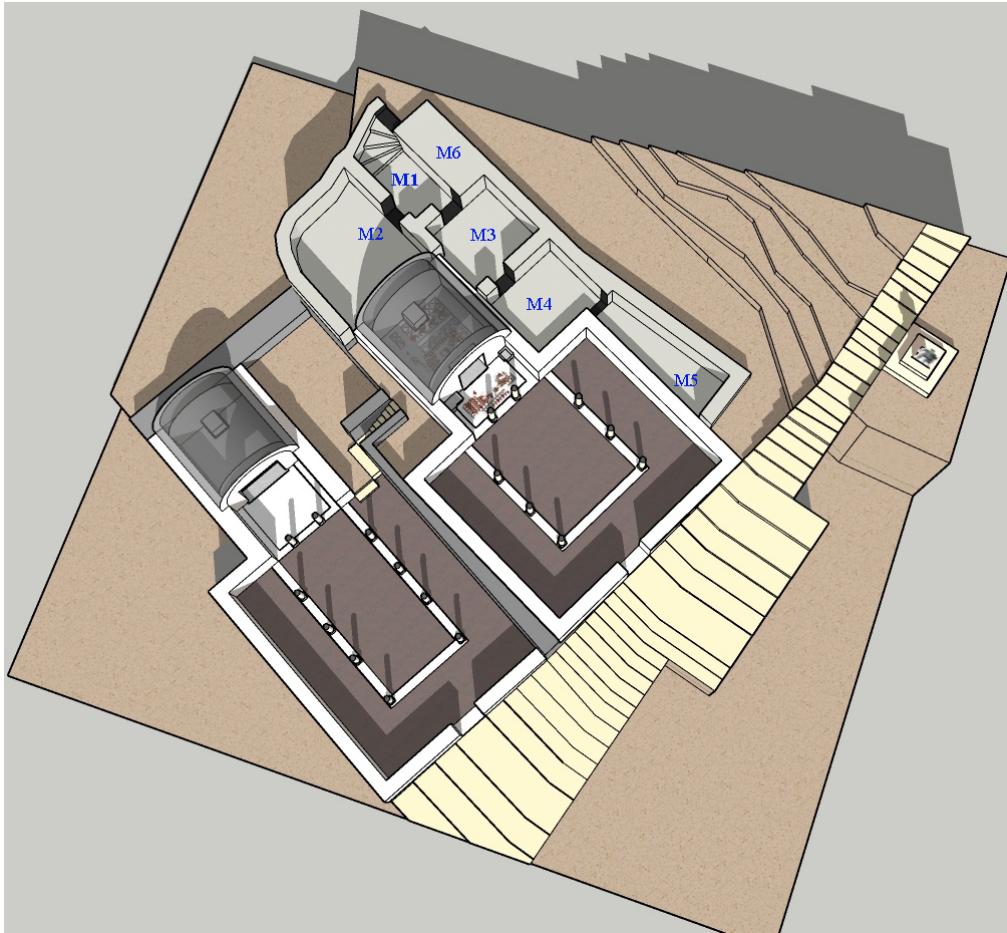


Fig. 4. 3D reconstruction of the Sebasteion and priest's residence (Excavation Archive)

location signified not just the consecration of an object used in worship but also symbolized active participation in the ritual and devotion to the deity¹¹.

The spatial distribution within the complex illustrates this point: production traces in M1 suggest a workshop function, while figurines and votive objects in M2–M3 indicate cultic use; the pottery assemblage in Rooms M4–M6 reflects storage and domestic activities. Finds such as a seated marble small statue, bronze figurines of Zeus and Hermes-Thoth, an Isis appliqué, a bone plaque with a Heracles composition, finger rings depicting Aphrodite, and a limestone *louterion* demonstrate that the area hosted multi-layered and syncretic religious practices¹². This should be understood within the context of religious plurality widely observed in Roman Imperial Asia Minor. The bench (or table) like architectural arrangement in the *atrium* of the southern temple, together with the large number of iron knives found throughout the complex, complements the spatial organisation associated with sacrifice and ritual preparation.

The evidence indicates that the complex served as a hybrid space where a cult official resided alongside ongoing ritual activity. However, the survival of only the inscribed rim fragments, with

¹¹ For the *phialai* of the gods, see Gaifman 2018, 456–460.

¹² For some examples found within the building complex, see Tekinalp & Sancaktar 2022, 592, 599 Figs. 5, 7, 10.

no body or base fragments preserved, suggests that the object may have been secondarily incorporated into the fill layer. Therefore, when evaluating the bronze bowl, one should consider that it may reflect a contemporary redeposition process within the archaeological context.

Description

The rim and upper body of the bowl can be largely reconstructed from the six surviving fragments (Fig. 5). There are no pieces from the lower body or base. Dimensions: rim diameter (restored) 17 cm, height (preserved) 3.2 cm, weight 175.34 g. The surface is generally simple, and the workmanship appears regular. The wall thickness of the body is 0.2 cm. Corrosion marks and patina, predominantly greenish tones with occasional dark discolouration, are observed on the surface. Some fragments show deformations due to mechanical damage. The irregular edges of the breaks suggest that fragmentation occurred as a result of post-depositional processes.

The vessel is generally cup-shaped, with an everted rim profile. The rim fragments are thick-walled and concave in profile, with the lip slightly rounded. At the junction of the rim and the body, two grooves run around the circumference of the bowl. These grooves function as a moulding element accentuating the transition between the rim and the body. No decorative features are preserved on the small surviving body fragments. The preservation of only the inscribed upper part of the bowl and the absence of lower body fragments indicate that the bowl's complete form is not preserved. This suggests that the bowl was damaged after its use and was probably broken before being secondarily incorporated into the fill.

Votive Inscription for Megale Thea Demeter

A Greek inscription runs around the exterior of the bowl, immediately below the rim. It was incised on the surface. The preserved letters were written in a regular line parallel to the rim (Figs. 5-7a-e). L.H.: 0.6 cm (*my*) - 1 cm (*alpha*).

Date: 2nd-3rd century CE, based on letter forms (Θ, ω, and Ϛ). Also, the coin of Tranquillina (241-244 CE) found in the same layer supports the date.

μεγάλη θεᾶ Δήμητρι Θεό[δ]αμος οἰκωνόμ[ο]ς.

To the Great Goddess Demeter, Theo[d]amos the steward.

Broken bar *alpha*, a straight bar in the middle of *theta*, and lunate *omega*. οἰκωνόμος=οἰκονόμος: For the interchange of o and ω, see Gignac 1976, 277.

The personal name is completed as Θεό[δ]αμος in the Doric dialect. Alternatives such as Θεό[σ]αμος or Θεό[φ]αμος could be suggested, but each is rarely attested¹³. The name Θεόδαμος is more frequently documented in Asia Minor, particularly in areas adjacent to Lycia¹⁴.

¹³ LGPN s.v. 'Θεόσαμος' IIIA p. 205 (Kephaloïdion); IIIB p. 193 (Physkeis, Angeiai and Skotoussa); LGPN s.v. 'Θεόφαμος' IIIB p. 194 (Melitaia).

¹⁴ LGPN s.v. 'Θεόδαμος': I. p. 212 (Ialysos); II. p. 214 (Athens); VB p. 193 (Knidos).



Fig. 5. Fragments of the inscribed bowl (Excavation Archive)



Fig. 6. Drawing of the inscribed bowl (Macit Tekinalp)

Megale Thea Demeter

Demeter is here attested for the first time in the *pantheon* of Arykanda¹⁵. In Lycia, the goddess is relatively less documented than deities such as Apollo, Artemis, and Zeus. According to epigraphic evidence, the earliest evidence of the goddess's presence in the region dates to the Hellenistic Period¹⁶. Prior to discoveries made over the past two decades, her cult appeared to be confined to the cities of western Lycia. A votive inscription from Telmessos dated to the 2nd century BCE is among the earliest evidence¹⁷. From the same period, the attested existence of a priestess of Demeter at Patara constitutes the first reliable evidence for an institutionalised cult¹⁸. An unpublished inscription from Kalyanda that mentions Demeter further expands the geographical distribution of the cult in the interior of western Lycia¹⁹. A Demeter head found at Antiphellos (mid-2nd century BCE) and an unpublished funerary inscription from Kyaneai offer additional evidence for the goddess's presence in the region²⁰.

At Tlos, in an inscription recording the organisation of *isolympia* and *isopythia* games in honour of Tiberius and Livia, the empress is exalted as the New Goddess Demeter (Θεᾶ Νέα Δήμητρι)²¹. Similarly, at Kibyra, an inscription dated to 41–54 CE and probably erected by Claudius also refers to Livia as Νέα Δήμητρι Σεβαστῆ²². Kibyra also provides an unusual combination in which Demeter and Sabazios were served by a common priest, an interesting example of cultic syncretism in inner Anatolia²³. In the Roman Imperial Period, Demeter's cult is also documented elsewhere in eastern Lycia: at Keretapa-Diokaisareia, the priests of Demeter (ἱερ[ρ]εῖς Δημήτριοι) point to an organised cult²⁴; at Tyriaion, a funerary inscription of Bile, a priestess of

¹⁵ The east-west oriented podium temple situated immediately north of the Mabed-Basilica has been proposed as a possible sanctuary of Demeter, based on the presence of a tethering ring and a sacrificial drain (bothros) within its temenos; see Gerçek 2018, 328. On the Arykanda pantheon, see *I.Arykanda* nos. 81-93 pp. 89-96; Frei 1990, 1742 (Adresteia), 1764 (Apollo), 1766 (Ares), 1773 (Artemis), 1780 (Athena), 1798 (Helios), 1801 (Heracles), 1827 (Sozon), 1838 (Tyche), 1845 (Zeus); Bayburtluoğlu 2006, 61; Sancaktar 2019, 15. On the Demeter cult, see Kern 1901, 2713 s.v. 'Demeter'.

¹⁶ Frei 1990, 1851. On the other hand, according to numismatic evidence in Lycia, only Balboura minted coins with Demeter iconography in the Hellenistic Period (2nd-1st centuries BCE: SNG Cop. 51), and in the Roman Imperial Period, only Phellos placed the goddess on its coins: *RPC* VII.2, 2214 (Gordian III).

¹⁷ TAM II, 84: [— — — —] | ἀνοίξας ἀπο|τείσει δηνά|ρια δισχίλια | θεᾶ Δήμητρ[ι]. | τὸ ἀνγέον Με|νάνδρου καὶ | Μελάντα τῶν | Ποσιδωνίου.

¹⁸ TAM II, 434: Συνέ<γ>δημος Μηνοφίλου κατεσκευάσεν τὸ μνημεῖον Μαμίω[ι] Μενεκρ[ά]του τῆι ἱερείᾳ[ι] Δήμητρος τῆ γ[λυκυτάτη?] | ἑαυτοῦ θρεψάση[ι].

¹⁹ E. Frézouls (1993, 204 fn. 18) cites an unpublished inscription from Kalyanda that mentions Demeter alongside numerous divinities (Artemis, the Nymphs, Dionysos, Helios, Sarapis).

²⁰ P. Frei (1990, 1782) cautiously describes these as possible or certain; Patara remains the only certain location.

²¹ Özdemir 2016, cat. no. 105: ...Ἰουλίᾳ Σεβαστῆ Θεᾶ Νέα Δήμητρι...

²² Kileci & Tüner-Önen 2024, 130. Cf. *SEG* 59, 1557.

²³ *I.Kibyra* 272: Μῆνις Ἀπολωνί|ου ἑαυτῶ ζῶν | καὶ Νανα τῆ γυναι|κί | vac. ζώση ☉ | ἱερεὺς Δήμητρος | καὶ Σαοάζου.

²⁴ *SEG* 48, 1575: Μηνᾶς Αἰῶνος μ[ε] | τὰ Νεοπτολέμο| vac. υ vac. | ἱεροδουλεύουσι ἱερ[ρ]εῖς Δημήτριοι. 1578: Αὐρ(ήλιος) Ἀπολώ|νιος Μενάνδρου | Δήμητρος εἰερεὺς | ἐποίησεν ἑαυτῶ | [μνή]μης χάριν.



Fig. 7. Details of inscribed fragments of the bowl (Excavation Archive)

Demeter, makes the cult clear, and the goddess also appears in the lot oracles from the same region²⁵.

The new inscription from Arykanda thus expands the distribution of Demeter's cult towards eastern and inner Lycia. What makes this inscription particularly stand out among the Lycian documents of Demeter is the use of the epithet *μεγάλη θεά* ('Great Goddess'). This formulation has not previously been confirmed in Lycian inscriptions of Demeter. Whereas the inscriptions from Telmessos and Patara simply describe Demeter as *θεά*, here the goddess is explicitly

²⁵ Naour, *Tyriaion*, no. 5: ...*Δημήτηρ*[ρ γάρ] σοι [καὶ Ζεὺς] | [*σωτήρες*] ἔσσονται...; no. 30: ...*Βιλη τῆ μη|τρὶ* ἱερέα *Δήμητρος*... See also TAM II, 1222 (Saracik): ...*Δημήτηρ* γάρ σοι καὶ Ζεὺς *σωτήρες* ἔσσονται...

accorded an honorific epithet. The direct application of *μεγάλη* to Demeter is relatively rare, though attested in several places²⁶. In Asia Minor, two inscriptions from Smyrna record the epithet *μεγάλη θεά* together with *θεσμοφόρος* for Demeter²⁷. Although the formulation *μεγάλη θεά* for Demeter is uncommon, it should not be regarded as entirely alien.

Except for Demeter, the epithet *μεγάλη θεά* or simply *μεγάλη* is used most extensively for the cult of Isis²⁸. The historical relationship of the Mater Magna with the formula *μεγάλη θεά* must also be considered. N. Belayche has shown that in Anatolian cultic naming traditions of the Mater Magna, the formula *Μήτηρ θεῶν* is primary, while the epithet of *μεγάλη* is used much more rarely for Anatolian Mother Goddesses and is closely connected with the Roman creation of the ‘Mater Magna’²⁹. This observation adds further meaning to the epithet in the Arykanda inscription: its use for Demeter aligns with the general theological developments of the imperial period, which were shaped in part by the introduction of local exaltations such as *Thea Nea*

²⁶ The formula *τὴν μεγάλην Δάματρα* is particularly documented during the dedication of a goddess’s statue and temple in Cyrene; *SEG* 9, 164: [Κλ(αυδία) Βεν]όστα Κλ(αυδίου) Καρτισ[θ]ένους | Μελίορος θυγάτηρ | [τ]ὰν μεγάλην Δάματραν ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων καὶ τὸν | ναόν. In the city of Marisa in Judea: *CIP* IV, 3502: Δημήτηρ | μεγάλη | Ι[- ca. 6 letters -] | κατ[ὰ] γῆν | [..]Ν[---] | ΙΔΝΙ[---].

²⁷ *I.Smyrna* 655: ἡ σύνοδος τῶν μυστῶν τῆς μεγάλης θεᾶς πρὸ πόλεως θεσμοφόρου Δήμητρος Μητροδωρον Ἐρμογέινους τοῦ Μητροδωρου Ματρέαν συμμάτυρα Ν[—?] | [—?] τὸν στεφανηφόρον. *I.Smyrna* 727: [—] | [ἀ]νθυπατεύοντος Αἰμιλίου —,] | [ἰ]ερατευσούσης διὰ βίου Κλ(αυδίας) — | [—] τῆς μεγάλης πρὸ πόλεως Θε[ᾶς] | Θεσμοφόρου Δήμητρος,] | [—] Ἀρηλίας Μελίτης ἱερείας καὶ ἀρχ[ιερείας] | [—] τῆς Ἀσίας ναῶν τῶν ἐν Ζυμύρνη,] | [—] ἀγνωθετοῦντο[ς —] ΑΡΙΟΥ[—] | [—].

²⁸ The spread of Isis cults in Anatolia and the Eastern Mediterranean is intertwined with her positioning as a universal great goddess, and the *μεγάλη* epiclesis has become an integral part of the goddess’s identity in this process. For some examples of usage related to Isis, see *I.Philae* 130 (πρὸς μεγάλην Ἴσιν θεάν); 151 (πρὸς μεγά<λ>ην Ἴσιν θεάν τὴν | ἐν Φίλαις); *CPI* I, 2 (Ἴσιδος | Θεᾶς | με[γ]άλης [μητρὸς θεῶν]); *I.Alexandrie imp.* 56 (Ἴσιδι θεᾶ μεγάλη); *I.Fayoum* 204 (Ἴσιδι Ἐσεγχίβει θεᾶ μεγάλη); *SB* 8870 (Ἴσιδι θεᾶ μεγάλη). The aforementioned epiclesis is also attested in an inscription from Halikarnassos, along with the imperial cult, as “Ἀυτοκράτορι Τίτῳ Καίσαρι Οὐεσπασιανῶ Σεβαστῶ καὶ μεγάλῃ θεᾷ Κύπρου Ἀφροδείτη...” (*SEG* 56, 1822), also for Aphrodite. An inscription from Lycaonia also attests the construction of a temple for the Great Goddess Hera in the city of Gangra-Germanikopolis; Marek & Adak 2016, no. 79: [Θεᾶ Μ]εγάλη Ἥρα | [τὰ] θυρώματα τοῦ | ναοῦ τὰ χάλκ[εα] | καὶ τὸ πρόθυρον | — —. On a small hand altar found near Philadelphia (Lydia), *Thea Megale* appears alone, without any accompanying divine name; Uzunoğlu & Aydın Tavukcu 2022, 161 n. 2: Θεᾶ Μεγάλη | Λίνδος κατ’ ὄνειρον. As with the goddesses mentioned above, this epiclesis was also employed for many other goddesses, including Leto, Artemis, Athena, Nemesis, Tyche, Anahitis, Astarte, and Thooris, from Italy to Egyptian regions, for similar purposes. For some examples, see Leto: *SEG* 8, 702 ([Λ]ητοῖ θεᾶ μεγά[λλ]η); Artemis: *IG* XII.2, 270 (μεγάλη Ἄρ[τεμις] | Θερμί[α]); *IG* XII.2, 514 (θεᾶ μεγάλη Ἀρτέμιδι Θερμί[α]); *I.Ephesos* 276 (τῆς μεγάλης θεᾶς | Ἀρτέ[μιδος] πρὸ πόλεως); Athena: *IG* II.2, 10347a (μεγάλης Ἀθηναῖς); Nemesis: *CIL* VI, 532 (Μεγάλη Νέμεσις ἡ | βασιλεύουσα τοῦ κόσμου); *SEG* 38, 1236 (Μεγάλη Νεμείσις | ἐν Πέρκῳ); *CIL* VI, 532 (Μεγάλη Νέμεσις ἡ | βασιλεύουσα τοῦ κόσμου) | *Magna Ultrix Regina Urbis*; Tyche: *IG* XII.3, 97 (Μεγάλη Θεᾶ | Τύχη); Anahitis: *TAM* V, 326 (Μεγάλη Μήτηρ Ἀναεῖτις); *TAM* V, 327 (Μεγάλη Ἀναεῖτις); *TAM* V, 328 (Μεγάλη Ἀναεῖτις); Schwertheim & Schwert 2018, no. 16 (Μεγάλη | Ἀνάειτι); Astarte: *CPI* I, 191 (Ἀστάραι θεᾶ πατρία μεγάλη μεγάλη); Thooris: *SEG* 40, 1573 (Θοήρει θεᾶ μεγάλη).

²⁹ Belayche 2016, 45.

Demeter in Lycia and its surroundings. In Graeco-Roman religious terminology, such honorific epithets as μεγάλη (*megale*), ὑψίστη (*hypsiste*), προκαθηγεμών (*prokathegemon*), προκαθηγέτις (*prokathetis*), ἐπιφανέστατος (*epiphanestatos*) are concentrated in the Roman Imperial Period, especially in Anatolia, and express a specific experience of divine power, the god's sovereignty over devotees, and a universalising claim.

During the same period, the situation regarding these epithets in Lycia was quite similar: the existence of honorific epithets such as ἐπιφανεστάτη θεά (the most glorious goddess) and προκαθηγέτις θεά (leading goddess) for Hekate of Sidyma indicates that the attribution of such titles to goddesses was a common practice in Lycia's religious discourse³⁰. In the city of Phaselis, alongside the imperial cult of the Augusti, Athena Polias, whose presence has been known since the Archaic Period, is also referred to as προκαθηγέτις θεά³¹. U. Brackertz suggests that this epiclesis reflects the ideology of the Hellenistic Period, arguing that cities bestowed political epithets on their gods to enhance the prestige of those divinities³². Many Anatolian cities, competing to attract supporters to their local festivals, appear to have used these titles to increase the popularity of their local gods. A similar situation arises with the epiclesis ἐπιφανέστατος at the Sura oracle: the god Apollo Surios, whose origins date back to the Archaic or Classical Period, is referred to as ἐπιφανέστατος in an honorary inscription from the early 3rd century CE³³.

Consequently, the first attestation of Megale Thea specifically for Demeter suggests that the cult of Demeter at Arykanda was probably well-established and publicly prominent in character. The epithet μεγάλη is sometimes added to distinguish a goddess from other local figures or to emphasise her universal/superior power. From a broader perspective, the epithet μεγάλη is closely connected with henotheistic tendencies that elevate one deity above others. This phenomenon is sometimes called '*megatheism*', describing the practice in the Roman Imperial Period of presenting certain gods as the greatest, the only true, or the all-powerful deity³⁴. The dedicator, therefore, chooses an expression that affirms the superiority and authority of his goddess when presenting his votive offering.

³⁰ TAM II, 188b-189a; Frei 1990, 1796.

³¹ TAM II, 1200: ...ίερα]τεύσαντα τῆς προκαθηγέτ[ι]δος τῆς πόλεως θεᾶς Ἀθηνᾶς | Πολιάδος καὶ τῶν θεῶν Σεβασ[τῶν]... The epiclesis in question has also been used for Artemis in Ephesos (Merkelbach & Stauber 1996, 11) and for Hermes in Termessos (SEG 17, 552).

³² U. Brackertz (1976, 211) also distinguished various exaltation expressions used specifically during the Hellenistic Period to identify a chief deity by engaging in a special relationship with a city: 1-) ἀρχηγέτις, ἀρχηγέτις (τῆς πόλεως) 2-) (προ)καθηγεμών, (προ)καθηγέτις (τῆς πόλεως) 3-) ὁ προεστώς (ἢ προεστῶσα) τῆς πόλεως 4-) ὁ τῆς πόλεως θεός. On the epicleses in question, see Geisau 1957, col. 171; Kroll 1982, 69; Cole 1995, 305.

³³ Petersen & von Luschan 1889, 45, 82: ἐπιφανεστάτῳ θεῶ Σουρίῳ | Ἀπόλλωνι Μυρέων, τῆς μητροπό[λεως] τοῦ Λυκίων ἔθνους...

³⁴ Versnel 1998, 49; Chaniotis 2010, 112.

Oikonomos Theo[d]amos

Theodamos, who made the dedication, identifies himself as an οἰκονόμος (steward). At Arykanda, this term is here attested for the first time, and the precise capacity in which it was held remains uncertain. In antiquity, it carried a wide range of meanings and could refer to different functions and statuses³⁵. In early Greek literature, *oikonomos* primarily referred to the manager of a household or an estate³⁶. From the Hellenistic Period onwards, it was used for regional financial administrators in royal administrations as well as for financial officials of various civic institutions³⁷. In the Roman Imperial Period, the term became common in Asia Minor and was applied mostly to slaves or freedmen who acted as stewards of large private estates or civic institutions³⁸.

Lycian inscriptions attesting *oikonomoi* conform to this general pattern. A decree from Limyra dating to the Ptolemaic period mentions *oikonomoi* as royal financial administrators, offering important evidence of Lycia's administrative structure under Ptolemaic rule³⁹. For the Roman Imperial Period, a Latin inscription from Patara attests an imperial *dispensator* of Nero; here, the Latin term *dispensator* is used as the equivalent of *oikonomos*, revealing the connection of this office with the administration of imperial estates⁴⁰. A tomb from Olympos records a woman who describes her second husband Makarios as *oikonomos* of the Lycian nation (οἰκονόμῳ τοῦ Λυκίων ἔθνους), indicating that the title could be applied to a regional official⁴¹.

The term could also refer to an office attached to a civic institution. At Olympos, a man named

³⁵ For the term of *oikonomos*, see Landvogt 1908; Ziebarth 1937, 2118; Reumann 1958, 339; Fernoux 2004, 238; Welborn 2011, 14; Goodrich 2012, 27.

³⁶ In the first place, the term was used to mean female household managers in the 6th-5th centuries BCE: Phocyl. 2. 7D: ἡ δὲ μελίσησ οἰκομόμος τ' ἀγαθὴ καὶ ἐπίσταται ἐργάζεσθαι.; Aesch. Ag. 155: μίμνει γὰρ φοβερὰ παλίνορτος οἰκονόμος δολία, μνάμων Μῆνις τεκνόποιος.; Lys. I. 7: καὶ γὰρ οἰκονόμος δεινὴ καὶ φειδωλὸς [ἀγαθὴ] καὶ ἀκριβῶς πάντα διοικοῦσα. Following this, it was also attested as meaning a householder (later with the synonym οἰκοδεσπότης) until the 4th century BCE: Plat. rep. 417a: ὅποτε δ' αὐτοὶ γῆν τε ἰδίαν καὶ οἰκίας καὶ νομίματα κτήσονται, οἰκονόμοι μὲν καὶ γεωργοὶ ἀντὶ φυλάκων ἔσσονται...; Xen. oik. I. 2: Δοκεῖ γοῦν, ἔφη ὁ Κριτόβουλος, οἰκονόμου ἀγαθοῦ εἶναι εὖ οἰκεῖν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ οἶκον.; Arist. Pol. 1282a. 22: οἶον οἰκίαν οὐ μόνον ἐστὶ γνῶναι τοῦ ποιήσαντος, ἀλλὰ καὶ βέλτιον ὁ χρώμενος αὐτῇ κρινεῖ (χρητὰ δ' ὁ οἰκονόμος)...

³⁷ For *oikonomoi* in the Hellenistic kingdoms, see Landvogt 1908, 10; Bagnall 1976, 80; Aperghis 2004, 269; Goodrich 2012, 27.

³⁸ For *oikonomoi* served for private individuals during the Roman Imperial Period, see Martin 1990, 14; Goodrich 2012, 71.

³⁹ SEG 60, 1536; ...τοὺς δὲ ὅ τι ἂν αὐτοῖς ἐπιβληθῆ ἡ πράσσει[ν καὶ τούτων] μηδεμίαν ἐπιστροφὴν ποιῆσθαι τοὺς οἰκονόμους... and ...συντάξαι δὲ τοῖς οἰκονόμοις καὶ τοῖς ἐπὶ τῶν ὠνῶν νόμους καὶ τὰ διαγράμματα καὶ τὰ διορθώ- ματα ἐκτιθέναι ἐκάστης ἡμέρας πρὸ τῶν λογιστηρίων ἐν λευκώμασιν γεγραμμένα... For the Lycian administration during Ptolemaic period, see Bagnall 1976, 80.

⁴⁰ TAM II, 486: [...] | et Thaliarchi Aug(usti) l(iberti) f(iliae) | Thaliarchillae | Neronis Aug(usti) disp(ensator) | [c]ontub[er]nali suae. For the *dispensator*, the Latin equivalent of the term *oikonomos*, see Mason 1974, 71, s.v. 'οἰκονόμος'.

⁴¹ TAM II, 1163: ...τῷ δευτέρῳ ἀνδρὶ | μου Μακαρίῳ, οἰκονόμῳ τοῦ Λυκίων ἔθνους

Dionysios is described as the *oikonomos* of the city (οικονόμος τῆς πόλεως), likely a public official responsible for managing the city's lands⁴². A remarkable inscription from Korydalla records a freedman, Hermianos, who, despite being the *oikonomos* of the city, dedicated a statue of Athena Nikephoros to Septimius Severus and his family and a censor to his city⁴³. This is a rare example documenting the manumission of a slave in the province of Lycia: after the confirming of the *proconsul* his freedom in accordance with the law, and upon the decision of the Lycian League, he was appointed *oikonomos* of the city. He had probably been a slave of the city before.

The term *oikonomos* was also used for the steward of the private estates of wealthy citizens: two inscriptions from Patara record Zosimos⁴⁴, *oikonomos* of Tiberius Claudius Agrippinus, and Aphthoros, *oikonomos* of Claudius Titianus⁴⁵. Similarly, in Pinara, Symphoros, the *oikonomos* of Claudia Platonis, is documented⁴⁶. From Balbura, *oikonomoi* of large landholding families are known: the first is Philostratos⁴⁷ the *oikonomos* of Sextus Marcius Titianus, and the latter is Claudius Elenkes⁴⁸. A comparable instance is recorded from Kibyra: Artemon, a slave and also an *oikonomos* of M. Calpurnius Longus, presented a votive offering to Dionysos⁴⁹.

The evidence for *oikonomoi* in Lycia goes beyond these two fundamental categories. A *phratRIA* inscription from Limyra dedicated to Zeus Heliopolites records two *oikonomoi*, Anthos and Eutaktos, sons of Ligys⁵⁰, who were probably stewards of the lands of the god's temple. A different usage appears at Kibyra: in a tomb penalty clause, the violator is required to pay a fine to

⁴² TAM II, 1151: τόνδε τὸν τύμβον Διονύσιος, οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως...

⁴³ SEG 64, 1384: [Αύ]τοκράτορσιν Καί[σαρ]σιν Σεβαστο[ῖς Λ. Σεπτιμίω] | [Σ]εουήρω Περτίνακι κ[αὶ Μάρκω Αύρηλίω | Ἀν]τωνείνω κ[αὶ Ποπλίω Σεπτιμίω Γέ]τα εὐσεβέσιν εὐτυχέσιν καὶ Ἰουλι[α] | [Σε]βαστῆ, μητρὶ κάστρων, τὸ ἄγαλμα τ[ῆς] | Νεικαφόρου Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ τὴν λιβα|γωτρίδα τῆ πόλι Ἑρμιανός ἐλευθερω[θεῖς] οἰκονόμος τῆς πόλεως, κρεῖναν|τος καὶ τοῦ λαμπροτάτου ἔθνους | καὶ ἐπικυρώσαντος ἀνθυπάτ[ο]υ | τὴν ἐλευθερίαν κατὰ τὸν νό|μον, δι' ἣν ἐνεδείξατο εὐνοίαν.

⁴⁴ TAM II, 437: ...ἀπέθηκεν (sic) Ζώσιμος οἰκονόμος Τιβερί[ου] Κλαυδίου Ἀγριππείνου...

⁴⁵ Jameson 1966, 129: Ἐφθορος οἰκονόμος | Κλαυδίου Τιτιανοῦ τοὺς θρέ|ψαντας Εὐψυχον | καὶ Ἡράκλειαν μνη|μῆς χάριν ἥ|ρωας.

⁴⁶ TAM II, 518: τὸ μνημεῖον τοῦτο Συμφό[ρου] | οἰκονόμου Κλαυδίας Πλατωνίδ[ος].

⁴⁷ SEG 48, 1562: [Σ]έξτον Μάρκιον Δαι[μι]ανὸν καὶ Μαρκίαν | [Μ]νήμην vacat | [Φ]ιλόστρατος οἰκο|νόμος Μαρκίου | [Τι]τιανοῦ ν τοὺς | [ἰ]δίους γονεῖς | μνημῆς χάριν. SEG 48, 1563: [---]||[---] οἰκονόμος? Τ. Μαρ[κ]ίου Διοτηριανοῦ τὸν στῦλον || [κ]αὶ τὰ ἐπιφερόμενα ἀγάλματα αὐτοῦ τε καὶ τῆς γυναικὸς αὐτοῦ Γνώ[μ]ης θυγατρὸς Μαρ[κ]ίου Φιλοστράτου | χάριν μνημῆς | τῆς εἰς αὐτούς | ζῶσιν.

⁴⁸ SEG 62, 1405: [τοῦτο τὸ ἀνγ]εῖο[ν] | [ca. 3 Ἐλ]ενκίου Βαλβουρέως | [υἱο]ῦ Κλα[υ]δίου Ἐλεγκέως οἰκο[νό]μος ἐγένετο ἑαυτῶ...

⁴⁹ SEG 48, 1606: Ἀρτέμων Μ(άρκου) • Καλπουρν[ί]ου Λόγγου δοῦλος οἰκονόμος Διονύσιω θε|ῶ ἐπηκῶ εὐχὴν. See also SEG 48, 1604 Μητρὶ Ἀλασσηνῆ | Ἀρτέμων Σω[.] | ΜΑΡΙ ^{vvv} ΟΣ[.] . | ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας | καὶ προκοπῆς • Μ(άρκου) • | Καλπουρνίου • Λόγγου • τοῦ δεσπότη | αὐτοῦ • εὐξάμενος | ἀνέστησεν. SEG 48, 1593: [- - - - -] Μάρ[κ]ου Καλπορνίου Λό[γ]γου οἰκο[νό]μος | Διὶ εὐχὴν ἀνέθηκε. See also Corsten 2005, 17.

⁵⁰ SEG 27, 929 (= 56, 1728 and 62, 1416): Ὑπογραφή Διὸς Ἡλιοπολιτοῦ. Ἄνθος Λίγγυος οἰκονόμος, Μῆνις Καβαλος, Σάλλυος Ἀρτάδος, Ἀθηναγόρας Μενάνδρου, Ἀπολλώνιος Μενεστράτου, Εὐτακτος Λίγγυος οἰκονόμος....

the *oikonomos* of an estate (τοῦ τόπου)⁵¹.

As for Theodamos at Arykanda, given the direct spatial relationship of the building complex with the Sebasteion and the pronounced ritual character of the findspot, it is most probable that he served as steward of the city's lands. On the other hand, the possibility that he was the *oikonomos* of a temple or the Demeter cult itself cannot be excluded⁵². In any case, it is understandable that a person responsible for agricultural lands would dedicate a votive offering to the goddess Demeter to ensure the abundance and fertility of the lands under his care.

Conclusion

The inscribed bronze bowl found in the building complex associated with the Sebasteion at Arykanda provides the first direct evidence for the cult of Demeter in the city. The findspot shows that ritual activities were not limited to temples but took place within more complex spatial arrangements where domestic, storage, and cultic functions intersected. It must be acknowledged, however, that the bowl's survival as rim fragments only, without body or base, raises the possibility of secondary deposition. Even so, this does not undermine the significance of the find: the building complex itself has yielded abundant evidence for cult activity, and the redeposition, if it occurred, appears to have taken place within the same ritual-domestic sphere. The connection between the votive and its broader spatial context therefore remains meaningful. The figurines, votive objects, and other ritual-related findings from the building complex indicate that the area had a multi-layered, syncretic religious function.

This votive bowl expands the distribution of Demeter-related documents in Lycia eastwards. The use of the epithet μεγάλη θεά for Demeter in the inscription suggests that the goddess's cult at Arykanda held a strong local position. This usage is consistent with the honorific religious discourse that became widespread in Roman Imperial Anatolia. The dedicator's identification of himself as an *oikonomos* points to an official attached either to the city or to the Demeter cult. On the other hand, he must have made this offering to Demeter, the goddess of agriculture, for the abundance of the lands under her responsibility. Beyond its value as an epigraphic document, the bowl should be understood as a ritual object in its own right. Metal vessels of this kind, closely related to the phialai that ranked among the most emblematic votive offerings of the Greco-Roman world, were not passive supports for inscriptions but active participants in the dedicatory act. The material substance of the object, the gesture of presentation, and the words incised upon it together constituted an indivisible ritual whole, through which the dedicant gave tangible form to his devotion to Demeter. Consequently, the bronze bowl not only testifies to the existence of the cult of Demeter at Arykanda but also advances

⁵¹ SEG 53, 1676: 'Αθηναγώρας Ὀληπᾶ κατεσσεκέασεν ἑαυτῶ ζῶν | καὶ τῇ γυναικεί μου Ἐνάδει ζώση καὶ τοῖς τέκνυς | καὶ ὄν ἂν αὐτὸς βουληθῆ Ἄθηναγώρας ἑτέρω δὲ | οὐδενεὶ ἐξέσται ἐνθάψαι ἐν τῇ σορῶ· ἐπεὶ ἀποτείσι | τῶ ἱρωτάτῳ φείσκω * φ' καὶ τῶ ὕκονόμῳ τοῦ τόπου * φ'. | τοῦτου ἀντέγραφον ἰς τὰ ἀρχεῖ<α> ἐτέθη.

⁵² *Oikonomoi* could serve not only for a city but also for a temple; see Reumann 1958, 341; Goodrich 2012, 52.

our understanding of the spatial organisation of religious life and the theological language used in Roman Lycia.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr Macit Tekinalp, the director of the Arykanda excavations, for kindly granting permission to publish this material.

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* Abbreviations of epigraphical editions and reference works follow the "Liste des abréviations des éditions et ouvrages de référence pour l'épigraphie grecque alphabétique (<https://aiegl.org/grepiabbr.html>)" developed by the Association Internationale d'Épigraphie Grecque et Latine.

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