

ATATÜRK KÜLTÜR, DİL VE TARİH YÜKSEK KURUMU
T Ü R K T A R İ H K U R U M U

ISSN 0041-4255

BELLE TEN

DÖRT AYDA BİR ÇIKAR

Cilt : LXXIX

Sa. 286

Aralık 2015

ANKARA - 2015

BELLETEN

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ISSN 0041-4255

Yerel Süreli, Hakemli dergidir.

Aralık 2015 – ANKARA

Belleten’i indeksleyen uluslararası indeks ve abstraktlar:

America, history and life 0002-7065 1963-; Historical abstracts. Part A. Modern history abstracts 0363-2717 1963-; Historical abstracts. Part B. Twentieth century abstracts 0363-2725 1963-; MLA International Bibliography 2000-; Turkologischer Anzeiger 0084-0076 1973-; FRANCIS (French Online Database) 1985; Archaeological Bibliographic 0341-8308 1982-; Arts and Humanities Citation Index (AHCI) 2010-.

Türk Tarih Kurumu yayınlarını İnternet üzerinden alabileceğiniz adresler

İnternet Adresi: <http://e-magaza.ttk.gov.tr> - e-posta: e-magaza@ttk.gov.tr

Baskıya Hazırlık • Baskı: ÜÇ S Basım Ltd. Şti. 0312 395 9445

İÇİNDEKİLER

Makaleler, İncelemeler:	<u>Sayfa</u>
TEMÜR, AKIN: Thoughts on a Grave Stele From the Classical Period in Samsun Museum	817
GÜNEY, HALE: İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri'nde Bulunan Soloi-Pompeiopolis Kenti'ne Ait Bir Grup Sikke	827
ARSLANTAŞ, NUH: Abbasiler Döneminde Yahudilerin Yüksek Din Eğitim Kurumları: Yeşivalar	847
YEŞİLBAŞ, EVİNDAR: Diyarbakır'da Osmanlı Dönemi Şehir-İçerisi Üzerine Değerlendirme	877
YILMAZ, GÜLAY: The Devshirme System and the Levied Children of Bursa in 1603-4.....	901
BAYRAK FERLİBAŞ, MERAL: Rusçuk'ta Kaybolmuş Osmanlı Mirası: Vakıflar.....	931
GENCER, FATİH: Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Paşa Yönetimine Karşı Filistin Muhalefeti.....	979
ÇELİK, BİRTEN: Osmanlı Gümrüklerinde Kadın İstihdamı: Kadın Gümrük Kolcuları (1901-1908)	1003
YILMAZ, ÖZGÜR: Fransız Arşiv Belgelerine Göre 20. Yüzyılın Başlarında Samsun Limanı.....	1039
KEÇECİ KURT, SONGÜL: II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Osmanlı Kadın Dergilerinde Aile ve Evlilik Algısı	1073
YOLUN, MURAT - KOPAR, METİN: The Impact of the Spanish Influenza on the Ottoman Empire.....	1099
DEMİRCAN, HÜSNÜ: Kültürel Temizlik ve Bütünleşme Politikalarında Tarihin Rolü: Bosna Örneği.....	1121
Kitap Tanıtma:	
GÜÇLÜ, YÜCEL: Ahmet Tetik, <i>Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Umur-ı Şarkıyye Dairesi) Tarihi</i> <i>Cilt I: 1914 - 1916</i>	1139
Özetler	1145
İngilizce Özetler	1152
Belleten Dergisi Yayın İlkeleri ve Başvuru Şartları	1160
Belleten Journal Editorial Principles and Application Requirements	1162

CONTENTS

Articles and Studies:	<u>Page</u>
TEMÜR, AKIN: Thoughts on a Grave Stele From the Classical Period in Samsun Museum	817
GÜNEY, HALE: The Coins of Soloi-Pompeiopolis in the İstanbul Archaeological Museums.....	827
ARSLANTAŞ, NUH: Institutions of Jewish Higher Religious Education in Abbasid Period: the Yeshivas.....	847
YEŞİLBAŞ, EVİNDAR: Evaluation on Khans of the Ottoman Period in Diyarbakır	877
YILMAZ, GÜLAY: The Devshirme System and the Levied Children of Bursa in 1603-4.....	901
BAYRAK FERLİBAŞ, MERAL: Extinct Ottoman Heritage in Rusçuk: Waqfs	931
GENCER, FATİH: The Palestinian Opposition Against The Rule of Kavalian Mehmet Ali Pasha.....	979
ÇELİK, BİRTEN: Female Personnel Employment at the Ottoman Customs: Women Customs Guards (1901-1908)	1003
YILMAZ, ÖZGÜR: The Port of Samsun at the Beginning of the 20 th Century According to French Archival Documents	1039
KEÇECİ KURT, SONGÜL: The Family and Marriage Perceptions in the Ottoman Women Magazines: II. Constitution Period.....	1073
YOLUN, MURAT - KOPAR, METİN: The Impact of the Spanish Influenza on the Ottoman Empire	1099
DEMİRCAN, HÜSNÜ: The Role of History in Cultural Cleansing and Integration Policies: Bosnian Case.....	1121
Book Review:	
GÜÇLÜ, YÜCEL: Ahmet Tetik, <i>Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa (Umur-ı Şarkıyye Dairesi) Tarihi</i> <i>Cilt I: 1914 - 1916</i>	1139
Turkish Abstracts.....	1145
Abstracts.....	1152
Belleten Journal Editorial Principles and Application Requirements (in Turkish).....	1160
Belleten Journal Editorial Principles and Application Requirements (in English).....	1162

BELLE TEN

Cilt: LXXIX

ARALIK 2015

Sayı: 286

THOUGHTS ON A GRAVE STELE FROM THE CLASSICAL
PERIOD IN SAMSUN MUSEUM*

AKIN TEMÜR**

CATALOG

Inventory Number: 2013/31 (A) (Resim 1-3)

Place it is found: Samsun/ Kurupelit

Museum it is found: Samsun Archaeology and Ethnography Museum

Measures: Height 150 cm, width 92 cm, depth 15 cm

Material: Grit

Description: This is a grave stele which is made of grit as low- relief and which has triangle pediment. The left corner of the pediment is broken. The faces, hair and the surface of the figures are worn out. A heraldic composition of a sitting woman and a standing servant is placed in front of a temple or a house with two frontal Ionic columns.

Grave steles, which frequently appeared in the ancient world, are archeological finds that are made from materials such as stones or marbles. They are mostly carved

* I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to Director Muhsin Endođru for allowing me to carry out this research at the Samsun Archaeology and Ethnography Museum,

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in rectangular or a similar form of cubic, smooth and polished slabs. With inscribed descriptions they are meant to make the grave owner immortal. Grave steles, whose earliest examples can be traced back to the Mycenaean period, emerged as a branch of sculpture and frequently appeared in Greek art¹ in 7 B.C.. Although grave steles that appeared in Greek art display different typological characteristics with unique shapes in distinct regions and periods, most of them are carved in accordance with the Attica tradition of grave steles. The production of grave steles came to a halt in Attica at the beginning of the 5th century B.C. The development of grave steles was interrupted until 430 B.C. when it was on track again. Considering the subjects and compositions, it can be observed that late Archaic age traditions continued to exist. In this period, a new tradition, apart from local properties, did not emerge². Particularly, the anatomical structure of the inscribed figures on grave steles went in parallel with the general development in sculpture, ceramic and architectural works and thanks to this, dating was facilitated based on clothing and hair engravings, postures, foot, hand and arm movements of described figures on grave steles, objects that these figures hold in their hands and their architectural forms. Despite these parallelisms, it is to be noted that grave steles have idiosyncratic artistic properties in different times and regions.

When we first examine the architectural form of the grave stele under study it is observed that it has a structural form which narrows towards the top and ends with a triangular pediment. This form of structure is a very commonly used architectural form and it first emerged in the Archaic period. Since upper section of the triangular pediment was mostly damaged, its acroterions could not be thoroughly detected (fig. 1). Besides, in the right corner is a side acroterion in the form of a sphinx in seated position, to the extent it could be preserved, a mixed creature in the form of Griffin or in the form of a lion to the extent that it could be preserved in the right corner. When we look at the tympanum section (pediment), it is not clear whether it was ornamented, with a rosette or a similar ornament, or left empty since the pediment lacks the other broken half. A dentil and two Ionic columns in both sides are placed beneath this triangular pediment. The grave stele, with its triangular pediment, which frequently appeared after the classical period, its acroterion and architrave and side columns, is in the form of a miniature temple model (Naiskos³) which exactly reminds us the front façade of a temple.

¹ Mustafa Şahin, *Miletopolis Kökenli Figürlü Mezar Stelleri ve Adak Levhaları*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2000, s. 1.

² John Boardman, *Yunan Heykeli, Klasik Dönem*, çev. Gürkan Ergin, Homer Kitabevi, İstanbul 2005, s. 68.

³ Karagöz names these steles as "Ion Type" and tells that it is spread all around Anatolia specifically in the periods of Hellenistic, West Anatolia and Roma. Şhrazat Karagöz, *Anadolu'dan Mezar Stelleri Arkaik-Greko Pers-Hellenistik-Roma Bizans Çağlar-Anatolian Steles Archaic-Greek/Persian-Hellenistic-Roman Byzantium Periods*, Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul 1984, s. 8.

Looking at depictions on grave stele, we see two female figures, one sitting and the other standing, engraved on the stele (An increase can be observed in the number of people depicted on grave steles from earlier periods until late periods. Within this process, while depiction of one person was predominant in early ages, this tradition evolved into a form where two, three or more people were depicted together). The left depiction, which demonstrates the female grave owner⁴, is a side view female figure sitting on a stool with two cushions and molded legs (fig. 2). The stool bears the qualities of a simple stool structure mostly encountered in the Hellenistic period, rather than flamboyant crowns of the Ancient era. The sitting female figure, wears a himation on khiton. Her feelings are reflected on posture, her head is leaning forward without any motion and the upper body is slightly turned to side. In this figure, whose head is covered in half with coat fabric, her himation falls over her right arm towards the stool with zigzags. The left arm of the figure bent from elbow is extended upwards, until beneath the chin. Her right arm is extended to her leg at the abdominal level. With this posture, she is almost a herald of the type of “Pudicitia”, which would emerge later on. This type is a general description assigned for the posture of female figures with one arm on their abdomen, elbow of other arm resting on it and hand placed next to chin, and who hold the edge of their himations that are covered up to head. The prototypes of this type are observed in the Sarcophagus of Mourning Women⁵, which was dated to the middle of 4th century B.C. (Boardman 1995: 215, fig. 227; Pasinli 2003: 82-87). This posture arises as a result of sculptors’ objective of giving figures a sad appearance, and in later periods it turned into a frequently encountered type, particularly on grave steles.

The second figure on the stele depicts a servant (fig. 3). The servant figure whose prototypes were observed in the Attica grave reliefs here distinguishes itself from the main figure with her unique posture, clothing and smaller frame. Servant figures in Attica grave steles stand in a composition featuring loyalty to their masters, the main figures. The most frequently encountered scene for servant figures is that they carry belongings of female grave owners as is the case in our stele. Here, while the maid is holding a mirror in her lifted right hand, she is also carrying a jewelry box in the other hand. The servant figure is depicted as standing and leaning to left. The head and body of the figure are inscribed in a 3:4 ratio. Hairs in both figures are placed on head as a cap which is characteristic of this era. On both faces, forehead-nose line is depicted in a linear way. As in the sitting figure, the servant figure has also a

⁴ Research on grave steles so far has detected that the sitting figures on the grave steles, from the perspective of iconographic interpretation, belong to the owner of the grave, in other words the buried person in the grave. Ramazan Özgün, *Adana Arkeoloji Müzesi’nde Bulunan Klasik Çağ Sonlarına ait bir Mezar Taşı*. Prof. Dr. Haluk Abbasoğlu’na 65. Yaş Armağanı, Akmed Yayınları, Antalya 2008, s. 894.

⁵ John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture, The Late Classical Period*, Thames and Huston, London 1995, s. 215, fig. 227; Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Fourth-Century Styles in Greek Sculpture*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, 174, Plt. 47ab; Alpay Pasinli, *İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzesi*, Akbank Yayınları, İstanbul 2003, s. 82-87.

filled chin and a full facial structure. While the figure wearing a short-sleeve khiton is putting her right foot forward, and puts her body weight on her left foot.

In order to date stele, we had to find similar samples from Samsun and surrounding districts. Because, in determining periodical characteristics of steles it is very important that they are the artifacts of the same region besides their overall style resemblances. However, a comparable stele sample that was dated to the Classical era could not be obtained in Samsun⁶. However these steles were dated to 2nd-1st centuries B.C. and were not used as comparable samples since they did not have any stylistic and typological similarity to stele we have studied on. Therefore, in order to date artifacts samples of close proximity to the region or from the same era were chosen.

Our first sample is a limestone grave stele⁷ in the Museum of Sinop (fig. 4). A sitting woman and two other women standing opposite her are seen on this grave stele dated to 460-450 B.C. Figures on this stele, sculpted in bas-relief, are depicted in a temple (Naiskos) with Ionic columns and dentil on its upper side. The left side of the stele is broken starting from the middle of the sitting woman figure. Comparing this stele to our sample, many similarities are seen. First of all, in terms of form, both examples are included in the group of Naiskos style grave steles with their dentils and Ionic columns. In terms of composition, a female grave owner sitting on a stool on the left and a servant figure across her is presented similarly. Differently, however, two servant figures appear in the sample from Sinop. Considering the stool of the figure sitting on the left, it exactly matches our stele with its cushions and molded legs, even though its backside could not be preserved. Additionally, a rooster figure is present beneath the stool.

Looking at standing figures on both steles, a servant figure carrying a jewelry box in her left hand while holding a mirror with her lifted right hand is seen in profile in the Samsun stele. In the sample from Sinop, while the frontal figure is holding a jewelry box in her left hand, she is holding a distaff and a spinner in her lifted right hand. While the figure in the back seems to hold an alabastron with her lifted left hand, she pulls her right hand to her cheek.

⁶ Two grave steles found in the same region is published by Serra Durugönül, "Zwei Grabstelen einer Familie aus Amisos (Samsun)", *Epigraphica Anatolica*, Heft. 19, 1992, s. 61.

⁷ Ekrem Akurgal, "Zwei Grabstelen Vorklassischer Zeit Aus Sinope" *Winckelmannsprogramm der Archäologischen Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, 111, 1955, s. 5-10, abb. 1-4; Ekrem Akurgal, *Die Kunst Anatoliens, von Homer bis Alexander*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin 1961, abb. 237; Yusuf Boysal, *Grek Klasik Devir Heykeltraşığı - İ.Ö 5. ve 4. Yüzyıllar*, Güzel İstanbul Matbaası, Ankara 1967, s. 29, res. 26; Ernst Berger, *Das Basler Arztrelief. Studien zum griechischen Grab und Votivrelief um 500 v. Chr. und zur vorhippokratischen Medizin*, Bant 1, Published by Archäologischer Verlag, Basel 1970, s. 126, abb. 145; Hilde Hiller, *Ionische Grabreliefs der Ersten Hälfte des 5. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, Verlag Ernst Wasmuth, Tübingen, 1975, s. 60, taf. 12, o-20; Ernst Langlotz, *Studien zur Nordostgriechischen Kunst*, Published by Philip von Zabern, Mainz 1975, s. 125, taf. 38,9; Ernst Pfuhl and Hans Möbius, *Die Ostgriechischen Grabrelief*, Published by Philip von Zabern, Mainz 1977, nr.23, taf.6.

Having examined engraving of the figures, sitting woman is quite similar to our stele with her leaning head and slightly turned immobile body. Here, as in the sample from Samsun, the sitting figure's bent left arm is extended towards beneath her lower jaw, her right arm looks extended on her leg in abdomen level.

Sitting figures in both steles wear a himation and a part of it falls with zigzags towards the stool over right arm. These zigzagging curls on the clothing of figures are an indication that masters worked with older methods⁸. As characteristics of the period, these curls can be observed in many relief artifacts, such as sitting goddess sculpture⁹ from Tarent dated to 480-460 B.C. and the Delphi bronze statue¹⁰, as well as independent sculpture artifacts and stelles of Paros¹¹, Akropolis¹², Giustiniani¹³ and Ikaria steles¹⁴ dated to the middle of 5th century B.C.

Again, another stele¹⁵ found in Sinop, dated to 450 B.C. bears great similarities to the sample from Samsun in terms of typology, except having a triangular pediment with acroterium (fig. 5). A woman sitting on a stool and a maid figure standing across her is seen in this stele as well. As in the first Sinop sample, again a rooster figure is placed beneath the stool. When compared in terms of movements, the sitting figure in the second Sinop sample slightly leans her head forward, her left hand is

⁸ Boysal, *ibid.*, s. 29.

⁹ Reinhard Lullies, *Griechische Plastik von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des Hellenismus*, Hirmer Verlag, München 1956, s. 54, abb. 97-101; Carl Blümel, *Die Archaisch Griechischen Skulpturen der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*, Akademie-Verlag, Berlin 1964, s. 29-30, abb. 55-59; Jean Charbonneaux, Roland Martin and Francois Villard, *Das Klassische Griechenland: 480-330 v. Chr.*, C.H. Beck, München 1971, s. 384, abb. 106; John Boardman, Jose Dörig, Werner Fuchs and Max Hirmer, *Die Griechische Kunst*, Hirmer Verlag, München 1976, s. 127, abb. 155; Werner Fuchs, *Die Skulptur Der Griechen*, Hirmer Verlag, München 1979, s. 257, abb. 284-285; Andrew Stewart, *Greek Sculpture, An Exploration*, Yale University Press, London 1990, s. 139, fig. 256; John Griffiths Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, Pearson/Prentice Hall, London 2002, s. 235, fig. 7.30; Peter C. Bol and Marianne Kreikenbom, *Klassische Plastik*, Philipp von Zabern, Mainz 2004, s. 58, abb. 63; Andreas Scholl and Platz Horster, *Die Antikensammlung: Altes Museum, Pergamonmuseum*, Published by Philip von Zabern, Mainz 2007, s. 149, abb. 85, 139.

¹⁰ Gisela Richter, *Yunan Sanatı*, çev. Beral Madra, Cem Yayinevi, İstanbul 1979, s. 77, res. 116; Boardman, *Yunan Heykeli*, s. 52, res. 34; John Boardman, *Yunan Sanatı*, çev. Yasemin İlseven, Homer Kitabevi, İstanbul 2005, s. 142, res. 131.

¹¹ Lullies, *ibid.*, s. 61, abb. 140-141; Bernard Ashmole, *Architect and Sculptor in Classical Greece*, In Great Britain By Phaidon Press, London 1972, s. 133, Fig. 150-151; Fuchs, *ibid.*, s. 484, abb. 568; Karl Schefold, *Die Bedeutung der Griechischen Kunst für das Verständnis des Evangeliums*, Verlag Phillip von Zabern, Mainz 1983, s. 11, abb. 1; Stewart, *ibid.*, s. 149, fig. 304; John Boardman, *Yunan Heykeli*, s. 68, res. 52; John Boardman, *Yunan Sanatı*, s. 143, res. 133; Scholl and Horster, *ibid.*, s. 150, abb. 86.

¹² Boardman, *Yunan Heykeli*, s. 67, res. 42.

¹³ Boysal, *ibid.*, s. 27; Boardman, Dörig, Fuchs and Hirmer, *ibid.*, s. 131, abb. 169; Fuchs, *ibid.*, s. 479-480, abb. 562; Stewart, *ibid.*, s. 149, fig. 305; Bol, *ibid.*, s. 58,59, abb. 58; Boardman, *Yunan Heykeli*, s. 68, res. 51.

¹⁴ Boardman, *Yunan Heykeli*, s. 68, res. 53.

¹⁵ Akurgal, *Çıwei Grabstelen*, s. 10-15, abb. 5-7; Hiller, *ibid.*, s. 60, taf. 12, o-21; Langlotz, *ibid.*, s. 125, taf. 38,8; Pfuhl and Möbius, *ibid.*, nr.24, taf.6.

placed underneath the jaw and her bent right arm extends forward, all of which are the same in the stele from Samsun. They are also considerably similar in terms of clothing. In both depictions, a himation from a thick fabric, pulled up to half of her head, is worn and a part of her clothing is falling towards the stool over right hand. While standing servant figure is extending her left hand forward, as if she was carrying something, she pulls her right hand towards her cheek.

In addition, another grave stele¹⁶ (fig. 6) in pyramidal form, which was discovered in Sinop and has been preserved in the Istanbul Archeology Museum, is symmetrical to the description of stele covered in our article. Also, it bears a strong resemblance to the stele in Samsun in certain respects: First, there is a servant figure standing opposite the sitting figure. Second, there is a mirror in the servant's hand. Third, the sitting figure sits on a cushion. And lastly, there is no rooster under the stool. Even though the fact that the female figure in this stele does not put one of her hands on her jaw is a significant difference, it is also important in that such variations might be present on grave steles found in this region.

Also, absence of any inscription on the examined stele creates a question mark in terms of identity of the grave owner. It is highly likely that this grave stele, which emphasizes a woman, belongs to a woman. However, it has been proved that gender of portrayed figures on some grave steles of the Classical era is incompatible with names that are stated on inscriptions of the same steles. In this regard, inscriptions on steles in Sinop are quite explanatory. These steles have inscriptions stating that they belong to a woman. Based on these inscriptions, it can also be claimed that the examined stele belongs to a woman as well.

Since servant figures are standing behind the sitting person in both steles¹⁷ found in Sinop, we do not have any opportunity to compare these with skirt curls of the standing maid figure on the Samsun stele. For such a comparison, the most suitable samples are the Mourning Athena stele¹⁸, dated to 470-60 B.C., and Sterope¹⁹ and Hippodameia²⁰ reliefs, dated to 460 B.C., on the eastern pediment of the Temple

¹⁶ Hiller, *ibid.*, s. 59-60, taf. 11, o-19; Pfuhl and Möbius, *ibid.*, nr.22, taf.6.

¹⁷ Akurgal grouped the grave steles seen in the first half of the B.C. 5th century into three groups, Attica-Ion, Kyklad-Ion and Anatolia-Ion style, and included Sinop grave steles in the group of Anatolia-Ion Grave Stele type. Akurgal, *Zwei Grabstelen*, s. 26-28.

¹⁸ Lullies, *ibid.*, s. 61, abb. 139; Boysal, *ibid.*, s. 27, 28, res. 23; Charbonneaux, Martin and Villard, *ibid.*, s. 112, abb. 118; Boardman, Dörig, Fuchs and Hirmer, s. 131, abb. 170; Fuchs, *ibid.*, s. 509, abb. 593; Richter, *ibid.*, 83, res. 129; Adolf H. Borbein, *Das Alte Griechenland. Geschichte und Kultur der Hellenen*, Bertelsmann Verlag, München 1995, s. 141; Nigel Spivey, *Understanding Greek Sculpture: Ancient Meanings*, Thames and Hudson, London 1997, s. 133, ill. 90; Pedley, *ibid.*, s. 234-235, fig. 7.29; Bol, *ibid.*, s. 58, abb. 57; Boardman, *Tunan Heykeli*, res. 41; Boardman, *Tunan Sanatı*, s. 142, res. 132.

¹⁹ Lullies, *ibid.*, s. 58, abb. 111; Fuchs, *ibid.*, s. 180, abb. 185; Stewart, *ibid.*, s. 145, fig. 266; Bol, *ibid.*, s. 38, abb. 43g.

²⁰ Fuchs, *ibid.*, s. 180, abb. 186; Stewart, *ibid.*, s. 145, fig. 265; Bol, *ibid.*, s. 38, abb. 43f.

of Zeus in Olympia. Smooth curves on skirts of the mentioned clothing in all three artifacts show great similarities with the sample from Samsun. However, while a motion in the curls, albeit slightly, is represented by pulling of one leg in the samples of Samsun, Sterope and Hippodameia, the movement represented in Athena by pulling left leg backwards is not reflected on the skirt curls. It can be gleaned from this comparison that the sample from Samsun can be dated later than the Mourning Athena stele and closer to pediment reliefs of the Temple of Zeus in Olympia.

Conclusion

Studies on the Late Archaic period artifacts of the Eastern-Ion Art show that even though there is a valid periodical style in the all Eastern Greece regions in the Archaic period, regional characteristics are clearly seen in different centers of art. Nevertheless, the impact of Ion sculpture schools from the Late Archaic period in Anatolia is clearly observed²¹. Front view of eyes and side view of head, almond-eyes, narrow and thick lips and slight smile on these lips are the most evident reflections of these impacts in both Samsun and Sinop steles. In addition, a low stool without back support, slowly falling down of thick fabric on clothes, sorrowful, plain and a reserved atmosphere, leaning head and pulling left hand beneath jaw appear as the Classical era characteristics. Destruction of the city of Milet, which took a central position in the Eastern-Greek Anatolian cultural circle, by Persians in 549 B.C. also ended Ion art. Nonetheless, Milet-based sculpture schools survived in such northern regions of the Eastern-Greek world as Propontis, Thasos, Thrace, Macedonia and Pontus²². Both Sinop steles and the grave stele from Samsun, which was examined in this study, are examples on which the influence of Ion sculpture schools is clearly seen, and they are also the most significant evidences that grave stele tradition in Attica also survived in the Greek regions of Anatolia, particularly in Sinop and Amisos, which were colonies of Milet²³. Consequently, the stele under study can be dated to 460-450 B.C. as a result of the comparison of typological and stylistic characteristics.

²¹ Serra Durugönül, "Grabstele der Nana aus Sinope", *AMS 8, Studien zum antiken Kleinasien II*: 1992, s. 100.

²² Akurgal, *Die Kunst Anatoliens*, s. 270.

²³ Boysal, *ibid.*, s. 29; Hiller, *ibid.*, s. 59, 61.

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Fig. 1: Grave Stele from Samsun Museum (photo by the author)



Fig. 2: A detail Grave Stele from Samsun Museum (photo by the author)



Fig. 3: A detail Grave Stele from Samsun Museum (photo by the author)



Fig. 4: Grave Stele from Sinop Museum
(Akurgal, Die Kunst Anatoliens, abb. 237)



Fig. 5: Grave Stele from Sinop Museum
(Akurgal, Zwei Grabstelen, abb. 5)



Fig. 6: Grave Stele from Istanbul Archeology Museum
(Hiller, *ibid.*, taf. 11, o-19)