Roman Phrygia

The bleak steppe and rolling highlands of inner Anatolia were one of the most remote and underdeveloped parts of the Roman Empire. Still today, for most historians of the Roman world, ancient Phrygia largely remains terra incognita. Yet thanks to a startling abundance of Greek and Latin inscriptions on stone, the cultural history of the villages and small towns of Roman Phrygia is known to us in vivid and unexpected detail. Few parts of the Mediterranean world offer so rich a body of evidence for rural society in the Roman Imperial and late antique periods, and for the flourishing of ancient Christianity within this landscape. The eleven essays in this book offer new perspectives on the remarkable culture, lifestyles, art and institutions of the Anatolian uplands in antiquity.

GREEK CULTURE IN THE ROMAN WORLD

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Roman Phrygia: Culture and Society

Edited by Peter Thonemann

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Preface

Inner Anatolia is divided into two parts. To the east lies the steppe, the vast, monotonous upland plains of eastern Phrygia, Galatia, Lykaonia and Kapпадokia. Through most of its history, this harsh country has been given over to large-scale semi-nomadic stock rearing; the central part of the plateau, along the shores of the great salt lake Tatta, was known in antiquity simply as the Axylon, the ‘treeless country’. To the west, between the steppe and the Aegean valleys, rise the rolling highlands of western Phrygia, Mysia and eastern Lydia, supporting a mixed economy of agriculture and animal husbandry. Urbanism never made much headway in either district; remote, underdeveloped, with hard winters and pitiless summers, inner Anatolia was always primarily a land of villages.

Yet the people of inner Anatolia are not quite a ‘people without history’. The inhabitants of the villages and small towns of Roman Phrygia are known to us thanks to an astonishing abundance of Greek and Latin inscriptions on stone, mostly votive and funerary monuments, and almost all dating to the later Roman Imperial and late antique periods. Indeed, we are perhaps better informed about rural and small-town life in inner Anatolia than for any other part of the Roman world outside Egypt. Entire classes of ancient society, all but silent elsewhere, here speak with their own voice: shepherds with their flocks, bailiffs of the great Imperial estates and ranches, vine-growers and wool-merchants. The religious life of these Phrygian villagers is known to us in extraordinary detail. The church struck deep roots here at an early date; in the rich early Christian epigraphy of inner Anatolia, we can watch a single, unitary orthodox church gradually emerging out of a forest of local ecclesiastical communities between the third and fifth centuries AD. Few other parts of the Mediterranean world offer anything near so rich a body of documentary evidence for rural society in the Roman Imperial and late antique periods, and for the flourishing of ancient Christianity within this landscape.

In recent years, Phrygia has hardly been at the centre – one might say, has hardly even been on the periphery – of Roman and late antique studies. The study of the epigraphy, historical geography and social history of the region has scarcely progressed since the 1950s. With the notable exception
of Stephen Mitchell (see especially Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor, 1993), no scholar has seriously attempted to grapple with the related problems of Romanization and Christianization in the inner-Anatolian countryside. It is not hard to see why this should be so. The published inscriptions of the region are dispersed across hundreds of obscure journals and intractable corpora; very little archaeological work has been undertaken in the region, and the barren Phrygian Highlands lack an Ephesos or a Petra to attract visitors’ interest. For most historians of the Roman world, Phrygia remains essentially terra incognita.

This book, which originates in a highly convivial one-day conference held at Wadham College (Oxford) in July 2011, aims to offer a historical conspectus of the remarkable cultural history of the Phrygian Highlands. Chapter 1 sets the scene with an overview of the geography and historical sociology of Phrygia, from the early Iron Age to the early Roman Imperial period. I suggest that persistent Phrygian ‘underdevelopment’ in the Hellenistic and Roman periods should be understood in neo-Darwinian terms, as a highly successful adaptation to the experience of Achaemenid, Macedonian and Roman imperialism: Phrygian social institutions evolved as they did specifically in order to keep the state at arm’s length. Barbara Levick (Chapter 2) considers the stereotypical views of Phrygia and Phrygians found in Greek and Roman literature, and the ways in which these ‘negative’ stereotypes could be usurped and co-opted by Phrygians as an element of their own cultural identity. In Chapter 3, Claude Brixhe charts the development of Phrygian naming practices from the Iron Age to Late Antiquity: he shows that changes in Phrygian onomastics over time and space are closely linked to the wider historical trajectories of the region.

In Chapter 4, Ute Kelp is concerned with Phrygian ‘culture’ in the broadest sense; drawing on grave monuments and local mythologies of the Roman Imperial period, she offers a compelling account of changing local identities and communal self-definition. One of our chief sources for Phrygian social history is the rich figurative iconography with which Phrygians decorated their tombstones; this complex visual language of hair styles, clothing and tools is subjected to a ground-breaking analysis by Jane Masséglia (Chapter 5). In Chapter 6, I attempt to do something similar for the structure of the Phrygian household of the later Roman Imperial period, as represented in the funerary epigraphy of the Upper Tembris valley. Georgy Kantor (Chapter 7) provides a definitive survey of the impact of the Roman Imperial state on the institutions of the region (law, government and administration) through the Late Republican and early Imperial periods.
In Chapter 8, Stephen Mitchell takes us to Temenoutherai (modern Uşak) in western Phrygia, and a remarkable group of early Christian tombstones, dated by Mitchell to the late second or very early third century AD. These monuments show us a wealthy and confident Christian community of the Severan era, thoroughly integrated with their non-Christian neighbours, and prepared to make ‘a strong and lasting investment in their secular environment’. Early Christian funerary monuments are also the theme of Édouard Chiricat’s contribution (Chapter 9); his chief interest is the so-called ‘crypto-Christian’ epitaphs of second- and third-century Phrygia. In Chapter 10, Philipp Niewöhner uses the evidence of fourth- to sixth-century secular and ecclesiastical stonemasonry, the work above all of the famous quarries at Dokimeion, to make a strong case for the persistence of Phrygian regional distinctiveness deep into Late Antiquity. Charlotte Roueché rounds off the volume (Chapter 11) with an account of the early history of British and American exploration in Phrygia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The conference out of which this book developed was held under the aegis of the research project *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua XI: Monuments from Phrygia and Lykaonia* (2009–13), generously funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. The chief aim of this project was to make available some 387 inscriptions and other ancient monuments from Phrygia and Lykaonia recorded by William Calder (1881–1960) and Michael Ballance († 27 July 2006) in the course of annual expeditions to inner Anatolia between 1954 and 1957. The corpus of monuments is already fully available online (http://mama.csad.ox.ac.uk), and is due to be published shortly in book form (as a JRS Supplementary Volume, published by the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies). My thanks go to the other members of the MAMA project, Edouard Chiricat, Charles Crowther, Maggy Sasanow, Henriette Roued-Cunliffe and Joe Talbot; to Wadham College, for hosting the conference out of which this volume developed; and to my editor at Cambridge University Press, Michael Sharp, for his enthusiasm and support.
Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* for references to ancient literary sources and those of *Année philologique* for titles of journals, with the following additions and variations:

- **AE**  L’Année épigraphique.
- **BE** Bulletin épigraphique, annually in REG.
- **BGU** Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (later Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden. Berlin, 1895–.
- **CIG** Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum.
- **CIL** Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.
- **DNP** Der Neue Pauly.
- **FGrH** F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Berlin and Leiden: 1923–.
List of abbreviations


IG Inscriptiones Graecae.


ISE Iscrizioni storiche ellenistiche.


LGPN A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names.


MAMA I W. M. Calder, Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua I. Manchester, 1928.
List of abbreviations

Manchester, 1933.

MAMA V  C. W. M. Cox and A. Cameron, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua V: Monuments from Dorylaeum and Nacolea*.
Manchester, 1937.

MAMA VI  W. H. Buckler and W. M. Calder, *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua VI: Monuments and Documents from Phrygia and Caria*.
Manchester, 1939.

Manchester, 1956.

Manchester, 1962.


Leipzig, 1903–5.

PIRG2  Prosopographia Imperii Romani, 2nd edn. Berlin and Leipzig, 1933–.


RE  *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

List of abbreviations

RIC  
Roman Imperial Coinage.

Robert, Hellenica  

Robert, OMS  

RPC  

Sardis VII 1  

SEG  
Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum.

SNG  
Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum.

Syll.³  

TAM  
Tituli Asiae Minoris.

TIB Galatien  

TIB Phrygien  

TrGF  
Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta.
Map 1. Ancient Phrygia.
Map 2. Western and southern Phrygia.