

An Anatolian-Persian tomb relief from Gökçeler in Lydia

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Abstract

The relief block at the centre of this study was found in 2004 in a ploughed field in the northern region of Lydia near the village of Gökçeler in the district of Akhisar, in what is today the Manisa province. A standing male figure is depicted on the block, which probably belonged to a chamber tomb. Holding a cock and a bud in his hands, stylistically the figure points to a date between the late sixth century BC and the early fifth century BC. He has short, spiral curls and wears a long-sleeved, tight-fitting garment that appears to be influenced by the Persian style. Within the scope of Anatolian-Persian funerary reliefs, this example is particularly significant due to its typological and iconographical elements. Specifically, following comparisons with other works of the Persian period, it is possible to suggest that the figure on the Gökçeler relief is an African who is offering a gift to the tomb owner; the latter may have been Persian or have served a Persian. Thus, this relief has particular significance since it is the only known work of Anatolian-Persian sculpture which indicates that individuals of African origin lived in the Anatolian region under Persian rule.

Özet

Bu çalışmanın konusunu oluşturan kabartmalı blok, 2004 yılında, Lydia Bölgesi'nin kuzeyinde, bugünkü Manisa iline bağlı Akhisar ilçesi, Gökçeler Köyü yakınlarında, arazinin sürülmesi sırasında ele geçmiştir. Bir mezar odasına ait olabilecek bloğun üzerinde, ayakta duran bir erkek figürü tasvir edilmiştir. Ellerinde horoz ve tomurcuk tutan bu figür stilistik açıdan MÖ geç altıncı yüzyıl ile MÖ erken beşinci yüzyıl arasına işaret etmektedir. Figürün spiral buklelerle gösterilen kısa ve kıvrıkcık saçları ile üzerine giydiği uzun kollu dar giysisi, Pers etkisi taşımaktadır. Anadolu-Pers mezar kabartmalarına kapsamina giren bu eser, tipolojik ve ikonografik unsurları sebebiyle ayrı bir öneme sahiptir. Pers Dönemine ait diğer eserler üzerindeki tasvirlerle yapılan karşılaştırmalar sonucunda Gökçeler kabartması üzerindeki figürün, Persli veya Perslerin hizmetinde olan mezar sahibine hediye sunan bir Afrikalı olabileceğini önermek mümkündür. Bu kabartma, Anadolu'da Pers hakimiyetindeki bölgelerde Afrika kökenli bireylerin yaşadığını gösteren yegane Anadolu-Pers heykeltraşlık eseri olması bakımından ayrı bir öneme sahiptir.

The subject of this study – the Gökçeler relief – is a tomb relief of the Archaic period that was found in the northern region of Lydia, in the modern county of Akhisar in the Manisa province (fig. 1). The artefact was found in a ploughed field in the village of Gökçeler, in the vicinity of Şahankaya, located between the Yayakırıldık-Kayacık road and the Kayacık river. It was brought to the Manisa Museum in 2004 and was later moved to the Akhisar Museum, where it remains today. The preserved height of the brownish-yellow limestone block is 1.79m, with a width of 0.55m and a thickness of 0.25m. There is a relief on the front of the block only; the back is not smoothed but has been roughly trimmed. The top of the block is also

roughly trimmed and not smoothed very well. Its sides are well-smoothed and, on the left-hand side, there is a square dowel hole towards the top.

The Gökçeler relief was first studied by Chris Roosevelt in 2009 (Roosevelt 2009: 160, 241). The resulting report mostly concentrates on the context of the find and the general stylistic details of the work. Another study of the relief was conducted by Serra Durugönül and this too offers a general evaluation of the relief (Durugönül 2015: 156). This current study intends to carry out a more detailed stylistic evaluation of the Gökçeler relief and lay bare the archaeological importance of the work with regard to its artistic, historical and cultural

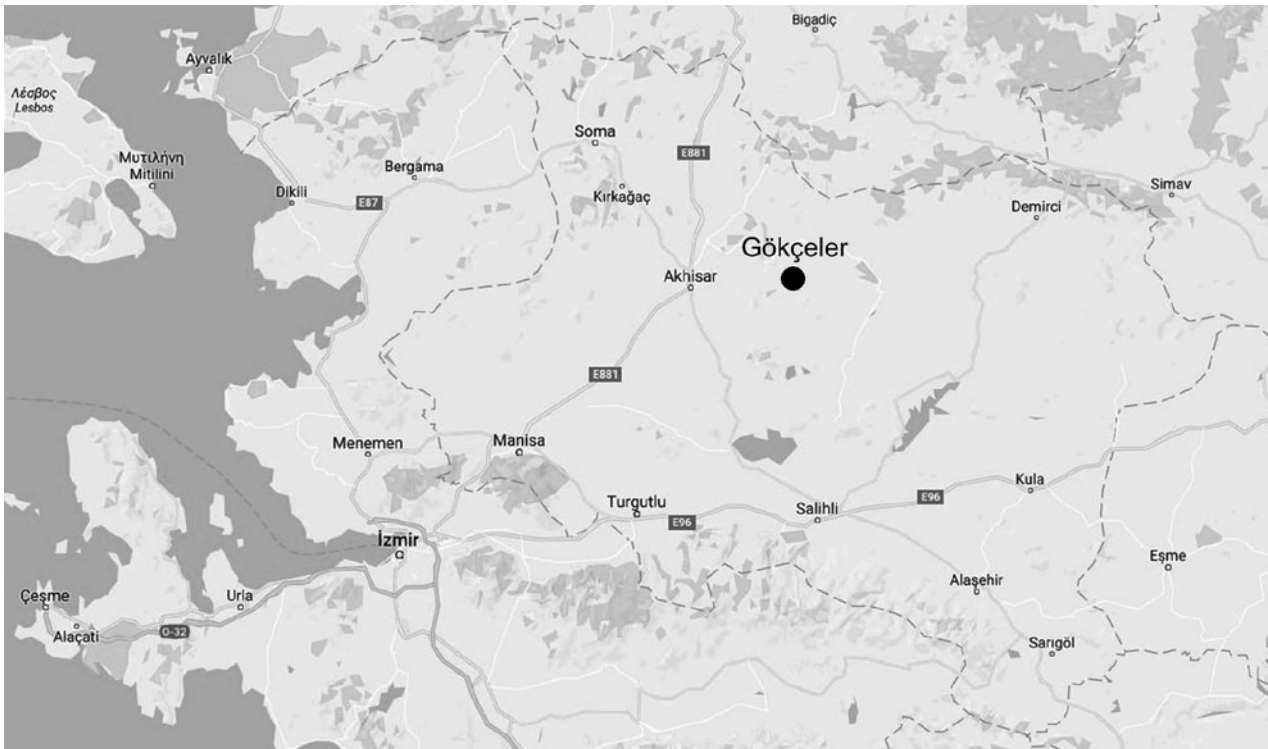


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Gökçeler.

features. Iconographically and stylistically, the Gökçeler relief displays both Anatolian and Persian elements. However, when compared to other examples of Anatolian-Persian-style reliefs, a set of differences can be observed. In particular, the shape of the head and the details of the hair of the Gökçeler figure were consciously created for the purpose of indicating an individual of a particular race. This type of depiction is not encountered in any other known Anatolian-Persian sculpture.

The Gökçeler relief

The relief on the front of the block depicts a male figure in profile facing to the left (fig. 2). The figure is standing; his left foot is advanced and he stands on a plinth (0.18m high). The figure holds a bird in his left hand and a bud in his right (fig. 3). Although the head and neck of the bird are damaged, it has the general contours of a cock. However, the long sickle feathers of the tail, comb and wattle, characteristic of cocks (Beazley 1974: 4, pls 16, 20), are not observed in this example. This might be due to some details of the bird being painted only, rather than sculpted. On western Anatolian and Greek tomb reliefs, male figures holding birds in their hands generally hold cocks, thus supporting the conclusion that the depiction on the Gökçeler relief is probably also of a cock. The right arm of the figure is hidden behind his bulging breast and we can see only the hand that holds the bud. It can be observed that male breasts are also depicted as bulging in other reliefs, and that they are often more finely worked

than the Gökçeler example (for examples, see Buonamici 1932: Tav. 18, fig. 27; Johansen 1951: 91, fig. 43; Richter 1961: 20–21, fig. 86; Özgan 1978: 94, 239, no. 43).

The head of the figure is rounded and the back extends upward (fig. 2). The short hair is formed of detailed spiral curls. The forehead is narrow, the cheek is wide and the upper lip is fleshier than the lower lip. The iris of the eye and the outline of the eye itself are shown in incised detail. There are red paint traces on the lips and eyes. The corner of the lips is emphasised with a vertical line, and the figure wears a slightly smiling expression. The tragus of the ear is treated, but the anti-tragus is damaged. The chin has a sharp angle; the nose is also damaged.

The figure is dressed in a long-sleeved and knee-length tunic. A pleat in the skirt has been left plain, without any plastic folds falling on the left leg; it is shown linearly and simply. Only the soles of the sandals worn by the figure and the laces wrapped around the ankles are plastically formed. It is possible that the other details of the sandals were painted, but these have not been preserved. The toes of the figure are largely damaged. Nevertheless, it can be seen that the toes were plastically formed (fig. 4).

The combination of the bud and bird is commonly observed in the funerary visual culture of western Anatolia and Greece during the Archaic period. In Greek sculpture, we see figures holding gifts in their hands, such as birds, buds or flowers, just like the figure on the Gökçeler relief. In such examples, the bird and/or flower is sometimes held by the tomb owner (Hiller 1975: 186, Taf. 24, 1; Çevirici

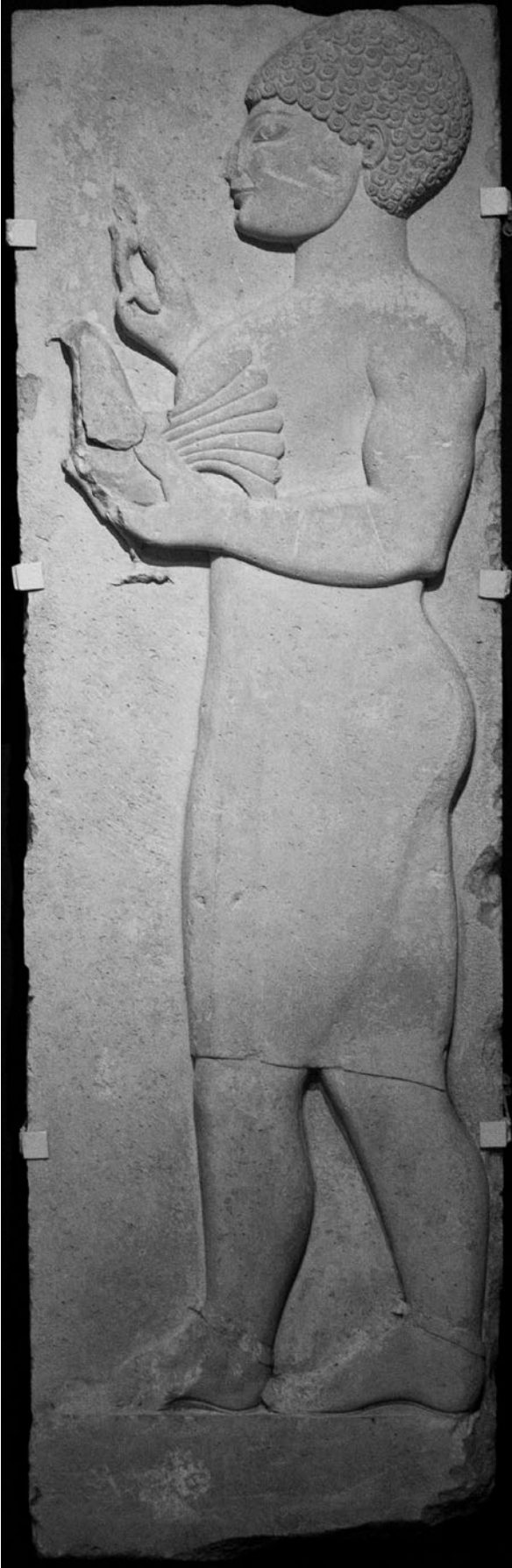


Fig. 2. *The Gökçeler relief (photo by the author).*



Fig. 3. *The Gökçeler relief: detail of the bird and bud (photo by the author).*

2007: 82) and, at other times, they can be observed in the hands of figures accompanying the tomb owner (Tritsch 1942: 42–43, fig. 2; Berger 1970: 100–02, 117–21, Abb. 122, 138–39). The Mnasitheios Stele, found in Boeotia and dated to 520–500 BC (Schild-Xenidou 2008: 17, 155–56, Taf. 3), closely resembles the Gökçeler relief in these particular iconographic terms (Roosevelt 2009: 160); the naked male figure on the Mnasitheios Stele has a rooster in his left hand and flower in his right.

The roughly trimmed back of the Gökçeler relief block, which can be seen paralleled in necrological reliefs, provides evidence that the rear was not visible when it was in situ. On the other hand, the square dowel hole in the upper part of the left-hand side of the block indicates that it was not freestanding; rather, it was joined to another block or structure. Conversely, there is no dowel hole in the right-hand side of the block.

When considering what sort of a tomb this relief block may have belonged to, we should first remember that tumulus-covered chamber tombs were the most popular tomb type of this region (Roosevelt 2009: 140–51; Baughan 2010: 275–83). Reporting on a study conducted in the vicinity of Şahankaya in 2001, Roosevelt mentions the existence of 17 blocks, of the very same limestone used



Fig. 4. The Gökçeler relief: detail of the feet (photo by the author).

for this relief, in the same field where the Gökçeler relief was discovered (Roosevelt 2009: 241). On this basis, Roosevelt justifiably suggests that these 17 blocks may have belonged to a plundered tumulus-covered chamber tomb and that the Gökçeler relief may also have been associated with such a tomb (Roosevelt 2009: 160, 241).

The existence of tumuli in this region is well-known (Roosevelt 2009: 118, 240). Unfortunately, tumulus-covered chamber tombs have attracted tomb robbers since antiquity, and thus many of them were damaged before any scientific studies could be performed. This situation has left certain questions regarding tumulus funeral traditions unanswered. Thus, although it is indeed probable that the Gökçeler relief was used within the masonry-built chamber tomb of a tumulus, it is impossible to determine this definitely based on the data available.

Considering further the burial traditions of the region, it can be noted that stelae were also used in rock-cut chamber tombs (Baughan 2010: 282–84). There are three in situ examples indicating the use of stelae in the rock-cut chamber tombs of the Lydia region. One was found in the dromos wall of the rock-cut chamber tomb numbered 411 in the Sardis necropolis (Buckler 1924: 13–14, pl. 3). The inscription on this stele without a relief leads to the conclusion that it cannot date earlier than the fifth century BC (Hanfmann, Ramage 1978: 23). The other two examples belong to the Sardis rock-cut chamber tomb numbered 813, which is thought to belong to the late Archaic period. They are located on either side of the stairs at the entrance of the tomb (Butler 1922: 116, 160–61; Hanfmann, Ramage 1978: 23, 75, figs 153–54; Baughan 2010: 285, figs 18–19). H.C. Butler considers that the lack of extant inscriptions on these stelae is due to the fact that the inscriptions (and ornaments) were painted (Butler 1922: 160).

The Borgia Stele, attributed to the Lydia region, is also thought to have been used at the entrance of a rock-cut chamber tomb. H. Hiller (1975: 47–48) suggests that this type of tomb façade decoration is characteristic of the Lydia region, whilst E. Berger (1970: 9–10) states that it is a more general Anatolian tradition. A tomb stele with a

carving of a man and his dog, now housed in the Bodrum Museum and examined in detail by R. Özgan, is thought to have been placed at the front of a rock-cut tomb chamber due to the dowel holes cut into it (1978: 79–80). This supports Berger's argument.

Consequently, one should not ignore the possibility that the Gökçeler relief, which was not an in-situ find, was originally placed at the façade or inside a rock-cut chamber tomb. Unfortunately, the existing data are not sufficient to confirm exactly what kind of tomb this relief was placed in, or in which part of the tomb it was utilised.

The date of the relief

The narrow forehead of the figure depicted on the Gökçeler relief, its wide and plump cheek, its narrow and curved eye shape and plump chin are all characteristics we are accustomed to seeing in Ionian sculpture (Payne, Young 1936: 57; Ridgway 1977: 66–67, 95–98). In addition to these characteristics, the round and plump body lines and the thin-looking, soft texture of the garment clearly reflect the Ionian style (Pedley 1976: 47). Consequently, we should first compare the Gökçeler relief to other examples of Ionian-style sculpture in order to surmise its date.

The western frieze reliefs of the Siphnian Treasury (530–525 BC), attributed to Ionian artists, offer a good starting point. However, the plain garment without pleats on the figure of the Gökçeler relief and the superficial workmanship of the arm and leg muscles limit the comparison criteria for this work in stylistic terms. Nevertheless, an assessment can be made based on its general stylistic characteristics. For example, the accentuated calf muscle of Hermes in the western frieze of the Siphnian Treasury (Brinkmann 1994: 176) and the representation of his garment present a heavier style than that of the Gökçeler figure, as do the strong muscles observed in the bodies of the other Treasury figures. In addition, the upper eyelid/eyebrow curve of the figures in the Treasury reliefs is characteristically earlier than that of the Gökçeler figure. Accordingly, it is possible to suggest a date for the Gökçeler relief that is later than that of the Treasury reliefs.

In contrast, the Gökçeler relief does have similar characteristics to the Polyxena Sarcophagus reliefs which were carved by Anatolian artists (Çevirici 2006a: 83–90; 2007: 77–79). The sarcophagus, unearthed from a tumulus on the plains of Biga Gümüşçay near Çanakkale, is exhibited today in the Çanakkale Archaeology Museum (Sevinç 1996a: 443–44; 1996b: 24–29; 1996c: 251–62). A young bride's preparations for her wedding, as well as those of the bridegroom, are depicted on the first long and short sides of the sarcophagus. The story of how Polyxena, the daughter of Priam the Trojan king, was sacrificed by Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, and the subsequent mourning are shown on the second long and short sides (Reinsberg 2001: 74–89; Çevirici 2006a: 121–46; 2006b: 23–52). The fact that the sarcophagus has pure Anatolian elements in both iconographic and stylistic terms (Çevirici 2006a: 173; 2007: 79; Çevirici-Coşkun 2017: 212–19) makes it a good example with which to compare the Gökçeler relief.

In assessing the sarcophagus, which has 37 figures on it, it is necessary, first, to examine each figure carefully in terms of body structure, garment style, garment-body relation and gesture. The figures have detailed differences in terms of these characteristics. The general body structures of the figures on the sarcophagus and their facial characteristics can be observed up until 520 BC. The finely detailed workmanship of the garments of some of the figures – the energetic treatment of garment folds, the rounder, more natural-looking pleat edges creating a 'U' form and the softer-looking fabric texture – and the more successful demonstration of garment-body relation link the sarcophagus to works dated to the early fifth century (my suggestion for the date of the Polyxena Sarcophagus is 500–490 BC; for details, see Çevirici 2006a: 117–20). I note in particular that the garment styles of the women on the kline on the first short side and Hecuba on the second short side are magnificent examples of skilled workmanship.

The depiction of the Gökçeler figure in a plain, non-pleated garment allows us to compare it to the figures on the sarcophagus only in terms of head and body structure. The facial characteristics of the male figures carrying Polyxena on the second long side of the sarcophagus are reminiscent of the figure on the Gökçeler relief. These characteristics include the lower eyebrow arch and eye curvature, the smiling expression and a limited emphasis at the corner of the lips. Although the arms and legs of the figure on the Gökçeler relief exhibit more superficial workmanship than those of the male figures on the sarcophagus, it can be argued that the movement of the limbs depicted on both artefacts reflects characteristics of the late Archaic period. It is possible to see the structural characteristics of the figures on the sarcophagus in other sculptural works of the last 20 years of the sixth century BC; these characteristics are observed in the Gökçeler example as well.

The Aristion Stele, which dates approximately to 510 BC, is one of the most famous works of the Attic examples reflecting the style of the period (Richter 1961: 47, 170, figs 155–58, 180, 211–12). On this stele a warrior figure is depicted facing to the right. The figure – Aristion – wears a cuirass over a chiton, has greaves on his legs, a helmet on his head and a spear in his left hand. The leg muscles and toes of Aristion appear to have a more natural representation than earlier examples and this particular feature played a role in dating it (Richter 1961: 47). As opposed to Aristion, the arm and leg muscles of the Gökçeler figure (the feet of which are damaged) were given only exterior outlines and the form of expression is not heavy. Although the difference between artistic-school styles makes them difficult to compare, it is possible to conclude that they both reflect the style of the late Archaic period. Thus, in these two examples, the contrapposto arrangement is not seen, the eyes are shown from the front and the fine garment fabrics are of similar styles.

Whilst their differences can be attributed to the artists having been trained according to two different schools, the individual talent of each artist should be taken into consideration also. Clearly, the effort and ability of individual sculptors to produce works that better represent human anatomy will differ between contemporary works. Since the individual talent of the artist plays an important role in the quality of the work, we should take this into consideration when assessing relative dating in terms of style. In short, the differences in style between the Aristion Stele and the Gökçeler relief do not necessarily indicate they are far removed in terms of date.

A further comparative example is the Plinth of Ball Players, dated to the late sixth century BC. Here, the structural characteristics of heads and bodies, and the garment-body relation are reminiscent of those of the Gökçeler figure (Mitropoulou 1977: fig. 13; Stewart 1990: 122, pls 138–40). As previously noted, the visibility of body lines beneath a thin garment fabric is characteristic of sculptural works of the late Archaic period, and this is seen on both the Gökçeler relief and the Plinth of Ball Players. Similarly, characteristic features of the face and hair – such as the frontal depiction of the eyes, the repetitive curls, the light smile on the face with emphasis at the corners of the lips – are applied in similar ways in both examples.

As already noted, the best way to determine the latest date of the Gökçeler relief is through a stylistic comparison with sculptural works produced in the Ionian style. The Dikaia Stele, an Ionian example dated to approximately 500 BC, may be a good comparison (Berger 1970: 44–45, 111–12; Hiller 1975: 36–47, 151–52; Langlotz 1975: 169, Taf. 52, no. 10; Pfuhl, Möbius 1977: 11–12, Taf. 3, no. 9). Although the body of the male figure on the front of the stele is mostly damaged, its head can be compared to that

of the Gökçeler figure. However, neither the vigorous expression in the plump face of the Dikaia figure nor its bouncy curls of hair are seen in the Gökçeler figure. Thus, it can be concluded that the head of the Gökçeler figure exhibits stylistic characteristics earlier than those of the more developed Dikaia example.

The Deines Stele, an Ionian tomb stele, is dated to approximately 490 BC (Ridgway 1971: 60–61; Pfuhl, Möbius 1977: 12, no. 10, Taf. 4; Özgan 1978: 83–85; Schneider 2000: 8–9; Doksanalti, Özgan 2007: 7) and may be used to help establish the latest date of the Gökçeler relief. The figure, depicted facing to the right, is engaged in a dialogue with a dog in front of him. The figure's body structure and mantle folds are depicted more naturalistically than those of the Gökçeler figure and thus we can conclude that it is later than the Gökçeler relief.

By making a general comparison of the Gökçeler relief to known sculptural works of the Archaic period, it can be deduced that it displays stylistic characteristics belonging to the late sixth century BC. As noted above, certain innovations in terms of the workmanship of the head, body and/or garments can be observed in sculptural works dated to 500 BC and later. However, the characteristics of the Gökçeler figure – including the form of the face, the representation of the eye, the repetitive patterning of the hair, the lack of any foreshortening in the fingers of the right hand holding the bud and the absence of contrapposto – are observed in sculptural works that date to the late sixth century BC.

On the other hand, the low number and simplicity of the plastic elements of the Gökçeler figure, made in low relief, attract attention when compared to wall paintings, rather than sculpture. Certain elements, including the lack of emphasis of the eye socket or upper eyelid and the original rendering of other details in paint, remind us of figures from the wall paintings of the tumulus tombs in the region. Important Anatolian examples which are dated to the late sixth and early fifth centuries BC can be found in burial chambers at Tatarlı, Aktepe, Harta, Kızılbil, Karaburun II and the painted house at Gordion. More specifically, examples comparable to the figure on the Gökçeler relief are seen at Aktepe, Harta, Gordion and Karaburun II.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to conduct a comprehensive and accurate stylistic evaluation since the bodies of the figures on the wall paintings at the Aktepe and Harta tumuli are not well-preserved. However, it is possible to note that the female figure depicted on the left wall of the Aktepe tomb chamber has rounded Ionian-style body lines similar to those seen on the Gökçeler relief. The heads of the figures on these wall paintings are better-preserved and offer the opportunity to make comparisons. Thus, the narrow forehead, curved eyebrows and frontal representation of the eye observed on the mural paintings of the Aktepe and Harta tumuli (Özgen, Öztürk 1996: 36–39, 40–

45; Bingöl 2015: 224–31) are also observed in the figure on the Gökçeler relief. In addition, the significantly protruding chin and plump facial contours, typical of the Ionian style, are common characteristics of the figures mentioned here.

The bodies of the female figures on the wall paintings of the Painted House at Gordion, which are dated to 490–480 BC, are relatively better-preserved (Mellink 1980: 91–98; Bingöl 2015: 209–11; Rose 2016). Although there is a gender difference between these figures and the Gökçeler figure, as for the Aktepe examples, the long-sleeved, knee-length tunic worn by the Gökçeler figure enables a comparative evaluation of the body-garment relationship displayed by these figures. In the Gordion examples the typically Ionian curved body lines and soft texture of the garment fabric can be determined. Typical characteristics of the period seen here – such as the visibility of body lines beneath the thin garment fabric, the frontal eye representation and the lack of foreshortening on the moving limbs of the body – are also observed on the Gökçeler figure.

In the scene depicted on the western wall of the tomb chamber of the Karaburun II tumulus, the figure that holds a towel in its hand among the servants standing before the tomb's owner, who lies on a kline, shows similar stylistic characteristics to the examples noted above in terms of his posture, body lines, body-garment relationship and head properties (Mellink 1972: 263–69, pl. 58, figs 15–18; 1978: 807–09, pl. 250, fig. 7; 1979: 486, fig. 4; Miller 2011: 97–98, fig. 1). Unfortunately, it is not possible to make a more accurate comparison since detailed photographs of the wall paintings of this tumulus have not yet been released.

We see that the upper eyelid of the Gökçeler relief is emphasised clearly and the eye socket is typical of the sculptural art of the late Archaic period (Richter 1961: 42, 47, figs 152–58; Hiller 1975: 151–52, Taf. 4). Painters, with no concern about indicating the depth of the eye, drew simple lines in the painted art of the same period, and it seems that the sculptor of the Gökçeler relief adopted the attitude of a painter, in terms of both the representation of the eye and in utilising other painted details. Consequently, it might be the case that wall-painting artists, participating in the same projects alongside sculptors, might carve a relief or vice versa. Certainly, the Gökçeler relief provides valid evidence to prompt us to explore this possibility. In any case, when attempting to date the Gökçeler relief, we should not assess it in sculptural terms only; we should also consider the wall paintings of the region.

Accordingly, the relief can be dated between the late sixth century and early fifth century BC, being comparable to other sculptural works, influenced by the Persian style (see below) and resembling the wall paintings of the region (Roosevelt 2009: 160; Dusingberre 2013: 163–64, fig. 90; Durugönül 2015: 156).

An African figure

Clothing similar to the long-sleeved, tight-fitting and knee-length tunic worn by the Gökçeler figure can be seen on the Apadana reliefs in Persepolis (Roaf 1983: pl. 47a; Roosevelt 2009: 160) and on the servants of the heavily Persian-inspired Karaburun II tumulus wall paintings located near Antalya-Elmalı (Mellink 1972: 265, pl. 58, fig. 15). This garment is part of neither the Greek nor the western Anatolian clothing repertoire, but it can be seen in works of art influenced by Persian culture (Miller 1997: 156–65). The Gökçeler figure's hair (fig. 5) is also depicted in a manner not seen previously in either Greek or western Anatolian sculptural art of the Archaic period (although not prevalent, there are, nonetheless, examples of this hairstyle in Classical-period Greek sculpture: Ashmole 1972: 12–14, 50–52, figs 16, 62). In late Archaic sculptural art, men are usually depicted with their hair either short (fig. 6) or rolled up at the nape (fig. 7; Richter 1960: 133). In these examples, the hair is generally wavy with some examples displaying spiral curls across the forehead and/or nape. The Gökçeler figure departs from the style of these examples with its short and tightly spiralled curls covering the whole head.

A parallel for the hairstyle of the Gökçeler figure is encountered in an African figure on a terracotta mask discovered at Agrigento and dated to the late sixth or early fifth century BC (Snowden 1970: 24, fig. 7). This figure also has curly hair depicted in tightly spiralled locks. The short and curly hairstyle of an African male head on an Attic plastic vase which belongs to the same period resembles that of both the Gökçeler and Agrigento examples (Snowden 1970: 24, fig. 9). Although the number of comparable figures is limited, it still seems

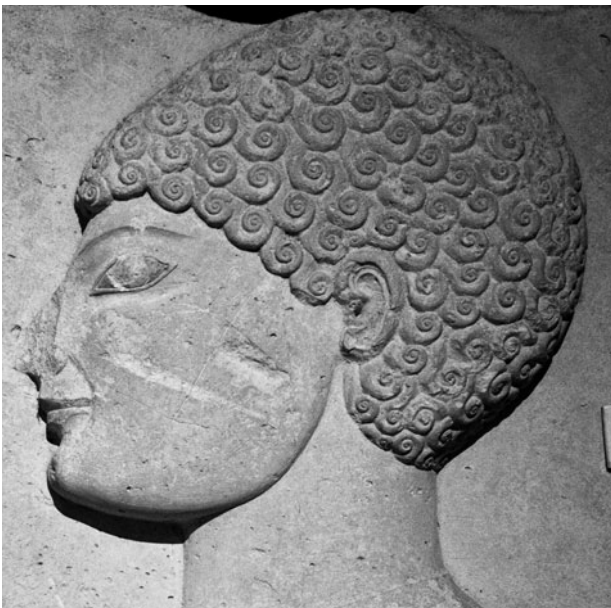


Fig. 5. The Gökçeler relief: detail of the head (photo by the author).

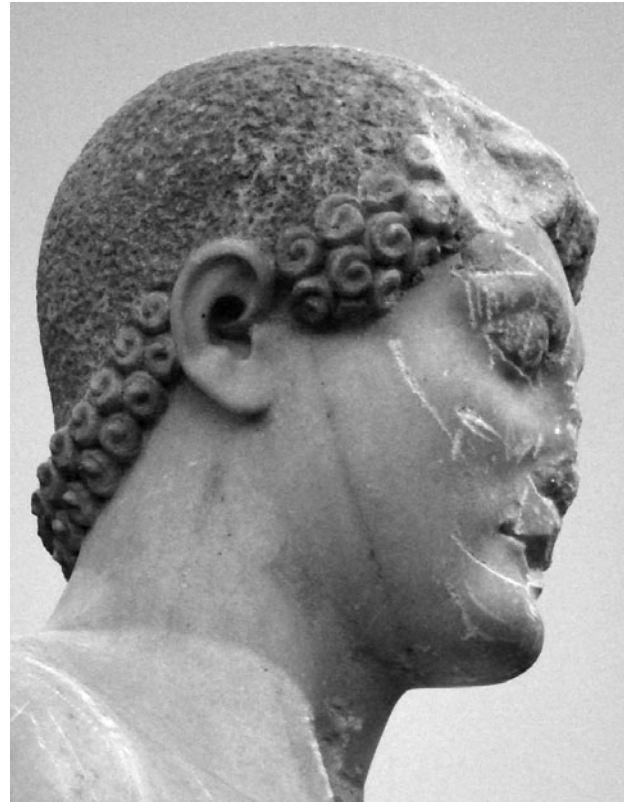


Fig. 6. Head of the Aristodikos Kouros (© F. Tronkin; Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 2.0; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/frenchieb/5928261916>).

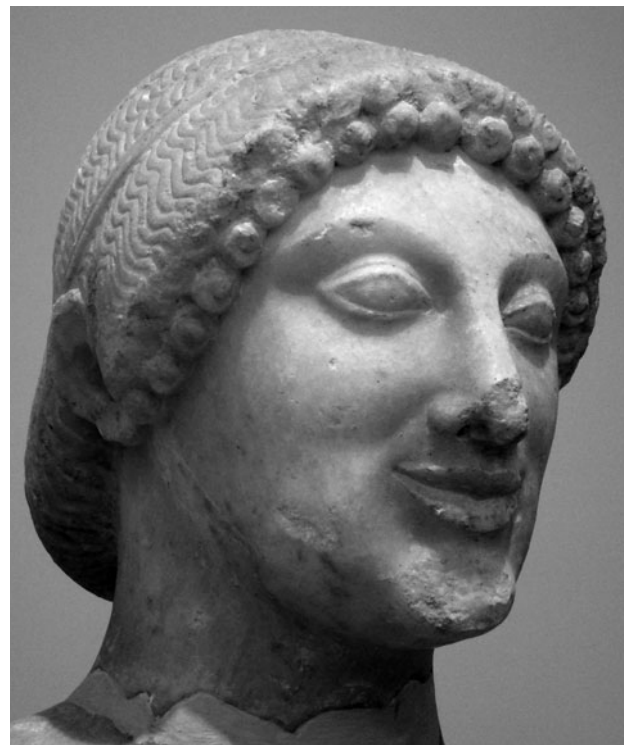


Fig. 7. Head of the Ptoon Kouros (© F. Tronkin; Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 2.0; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/frenchieb/5927694441>).

reasonable to conclude that such hairstyles were preferred for the depiction of African figures during the Archaic period. In fact, there are more depictions of Africans on Archaic vases than in sculptural works. On black- and red-figured vases, Africans are differentiated from figures of other races by being depicted with short, curly hair, flat noses and fleshy lips (Snowden 1970: 25–26, figs 15–22). Various archaeological materials from the Archaic period and later tell us that artists had a tendency to depict Africans based on physical stereotypes (Snowden 1970: 23). Undoubtedly, ancient authors contributed to such a tendency. In a number of Greek and Roman texts, the physical properties of an African race named as Ethiopians are narrated (Herodotus 7.70; Pliny *Natural History* 2.80.189; Petronius *Satyricon* 102; Ptolemy *Tetrabiblos* 2.2.56; see Snowden 1948: 31–34; 1970: 1–15). According to Greek textual evidence, we are led to understand that the most distinguishing feature of this race is, after their skin colour, their being ‘woolly haired’ and ‘flat nosed’ (Snowden 1948: 31–34). Given the vase-painting depictions, it is interesting that fleshy lips are not included among these stereotypical features (Snowden 1948: 32).

Returning to the Gökçeler figure and in consideration of the depictions on contemporary sculptural works and vase paintings, I would assert that the figure is African, particularly given its curly hair, wide cheeks and nose, and rounded head that extends upwards at the back. The African head on a seal discovered at Gordion is the only Anatolian find that might be used to support this assertion. The seal, dated to the sixth century BC, was discovered in Tumulus I (Dusinberre 2005: 23, 46–47, cat. no. 23, fig. 33a–b) and the figure depicted can be compared to the Gökçeler figure. The head of the figure on the seal, which displays Egyptian influence, rounds and extends at the back; the face has wide cheeks, a wide nose and strong eye curvature (Dusinberre 2005: 46). All these features are reminiscent of the Gökçeler figure. However, the short fleecy hair of the figure on the seal is depicted using cross-hatched lines – in the same style as Africans depicted on Cypriot seals (Myres 1914: 271.1550, 380.3161; Reyes 2001: 36–40) – while the Gökçeler example employs tight spiral curls of hair.

Persian influence

With a holistic understanding of the hairstyle and type of clothing of the Gökçeler figure now established, typological parallels should also be sought in Persian art. Accordingly, the reliefs that decorate the palaces of Persepolis and the nearby royal tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam should be considered. There are seven rock-cut tombs in the Persepolis area, but only the tomb of Darius I has been firmly identified via its inscription (Schmidt 1970: 80). The other tombs, for which construction began around 520 BC, are thought to belong to the successors of Darius I. In the

tombs numbered I–VI, the deified kings are depicted on thrones borne by individuals representing the nations under their control (Schmidt 1970: 80). The nations of these 30 throne-bearers have been identified through the inscriptions on the tombs attributed to Darius I (Tomb I) and Artaxerxes II (Tomb V) (Schmidt 1970: 108–10; Schmitt 2009: 35–41). Of all the figures depicted in these reliefs, only those representing Egypt and Ethiopia (Schmidt 1970: figs 50, 52, nos 19, 28) are shown with abundant, short and tightly curled hairstyles like that of the Gökçeler figure.

Other reliefs showing figures representing the nations within the boundaries of the Persian Empire can be found in the Apadana, Throne Hall and Council Hall. Twenty three nations are represented in the tribute procession on the Apadana reliefs, the construction of which began during the reign of Darius I and was completed in the time of Xerxes (Schmidt 1953: 85–90; 1970: 145–58). The nations represented by these delegates bearing gifts have been determined on the basis of the identifications of the throne-bearers depicted in the royal tombs (Schmidt 1953: 84). Unfortunately, the heads of the figures representing Egypt in the Apadana reliefs have not been preserved. Nonetheless, it can be observed that the figures representing Ethiopia (like the Ethiopian throne-bearers) are depicted without a beard (fig. 8) and with hair in the form of detailed spiral curls – just like the Gökçeler figure (Schmidt 1953: 88, 90, nos 10, 23; 1970: 154, nos 10, 23, pl. 104, G; Roosevelt 2009: 160 notes that the hairdo of the Gökçeler figure finds its closest parallels on the sculptural facades of Darius’ Apadana at Persepolis). R.D. Barnet, in his study on the identification of the nations shown on the Apadana reliefs, criticises certain suggestions made by E.F. Schmidt but concludes that the identifications of the delegates representing Egypt and Ethiopia can be accepted with confidence (1957: 67).

In the eastern doorway reliefs of the main room of the Council Hall, Darius I is depicted on a throne borne by representatives of 28 nations. Construction of the Council Hall started during the reign of Darius I and was completed by Xerxes (Schmidt 1953: 116–20). It has been determined that the nations depicted here have almost the same ordering as those of the Apadana reliefs (Schmidt 1953: 118). Unfortunately, the hairstyles of the figures representing Egypt and Ethiopia have been damaged beyond recognition (Schmidt 1953: 118, 120, nos 10, 27, pls 80–81).

Twenty eight nations are represented bearing the throne of Artaxerxes I in the southern doorway reliefs of the Throne Hall, the construction of which started during the reign of Xerxes and was completed by Artaxerxes I (Schmidt 1953: 129). The identifications of the nations depicted on the Throne Hall reliefs have been determined by comparison with the nations known from the reliefs of the Council Hall (Schmidt 1953: 134). Egyptian and Ethiopian figures are



Fig. 8. Head of an Ethiopian from the Apadana reliefs (photo by the author).

among the throne-bearers of the Throne Hall reliefs, and they are depicted differently from the figures of other nations, namely by being shown with short, curly hair (Schmidt 1953: 135, no. E5, 136, no. W14, pls 108–11).

In summary, we see that only those individuals representing Egypt and Ethiopia have African characteristics – i.e. different hairstyles – in both the tomb and palace reliefs of Darius I and his successors. This hairstyle can also be seen in the Gökçeler figure, and, accordingly, we can conclude that the Gökçeler figure does indeed represent an African. The depiction of Africans, seen on the Persepolis reliefs, is not observed in western Anatolian sculpture art. This suggests the possibility of some sort of direct or indirect relationship between artists working in the Lydia region in the Persian period and those working on the Persepolis reliefs.

Today, it is the *communis opinio* that Ionian masters participated in the large-scale public works initiated by Darius I in Persepolis. G.M.A. Hanfmann notes that Ionian influence is evident on the stelae found in Sardis and concludes that the Lydian artists who worked in the Achaemenid-Persian court style in Sardis in the late sixth and fifth centuries BC were in contact with Ionian masters (Hanfmann 1976: 40; Hanfmann, Ramage 1978: 25–28). The Gökçeler relief, which was carved in the Ionian style and displays Achaemenid-Persian influence, supports Hanfmann's ideas.

It has been firmly established that the Gökçeler figure displays Persian elements. However, it should be remembered that male figures holding a cock and bud are also observed in necrological reliefs in Greek art. In Greek art, the cock and bud may appear as erotic gifts. In this context, the garment worn by the figure on the Gökçeler relief is

significant in that it helps us to understand better the relationship between the figure and the tomb to which the relief belonged. Similar examples of the long-sleeved, tight-fitting garment worn by the Gökçeler figure can be seen on Persian-influenced stelae, found in Daskyleion and its surroundings (Pfuhl, Möbius 1977: 9–10, Taf. 2, 3–6). However, these stelae differ from the Gökçeler relief in terms of their decorative schemes and iconography. More significantly, we also see similar garments on the servants depicted in the Karaburun II tumulus wall paintings (Mellink 1972: 265, pl. 58, fig. 15) and on the gift-bearing figures of the Apadana reliefs (Boardman 2000: 142, 144, 4.15a). Thus, it seems logical to assume that the Gökçeler figure is an African servant or friend making an offering to the tomb owner. This is not surprising, since many different regions were under Persian rule, and so Persians lived together with people of other nations; the archaeological data obtained from two significant satrapy centres, Sardis and Daskyleion in Anatolia, indicate the existence of a cosmopolitan population in these centres during the Persian period (Bakır 2001: 173; Dusinberre 2003: 138–45). We even have evidence indicating cosmopolitan populations in small settlements in the satrapy regions. For example, the Achaemenid bowls, seals and bullae related to Persian culture discovered at the small rural site of Seyitömer Höyük, an inner-western Anatolian settlement of the Persian period, point to the existence of a Persian population at this location (Kaptan 2009: 452, 454; 2010; Coşkun 2011b; 2015: 56, fig. 61). The graffiti inscribed in the Greek language on locally produced pottery fragments indicate the existence of a Greek population as well (Coşkun 2015: 54, fig. 58). Furthermore, Phrygian graffiti on a stone used in the fortification wall dated to the Persian period and on a locally produced pottery fragment indicate that Phrygians also lived at this centre during this period (Bilgen et al. 2011; Coşkun 2011a: 91, figs 7–8; 2015: 39, fig. 39). Archaeological and epigraphical evidence from Seyitömer Höyük demonstrates that, during the Persian period, this settlement had trade relationships with the Greek world and had a cosmopolitan structure (Coşkun 2010; 2015: 54; Coşkun, Çevirici-Coşkun 2017).

It is not possible to determine the ethnic identity of the tomb owner by means of the figure on the relief. However, it would not be too far-fetched to assert that, during the period of Persian rule, a tomb with such a relief might well have belonged to either a Persian noble or a non-Persian noble serving the Persians, who had adopted Persian cultural habits (Sekunda 1988: 177). Some finds discovered near the village of Gökçeler that date to the sixth and fifth centuries BC display a clear Achaemenid influence, and indicate the presence of a Persian population in the region (Özkan 1991: 131–35; Roosevelt 2009: 241–42, fig. C.20; Dusinberre 2013: 150–51, fig. 75).

The Persian influence observed on the figure of the Gökçeler relief may be taken as yet further evidence for the existence of Persians in the region (on the existence of Persian populations in the region, see Habicht 1975: 65, 73–74; Robert 1982: 371–73; Sekunda 1985: 25; Malay 1992: 118; Şahin 1998: 86; Roosevelt 2009: 120; Dusinberre 2013: 102–03).

Conclusions

The Gökçeler relief is an important work which offers new data on the Persian period in the Lydia region. This study has determined, through a stylistic evaluation of the work and its Ionian-style characteristics, that it displays the stylistic features of the late sixth century BC. However, considering also the historical context and its similarity to the wall paintings of western Anatolia, a lower date limit might be set around the early fifth century BC.

Furthermore, the type of structure to which the relief might originally have belonged has also been considered. It has been concluded that it was most likely mounted in a tomb chamber; it was certainly not a free-standing stele.

As touched on above, the Gökçeler relief differs from the stelae classified as Graeco-Persian or Anatolian-Persian and which are mostly encountered at Daskyleion and in its vicinity. Firstly, unlike the Gökçeler relief, almost all Anatolian-Persian stelae have more than one frieze. Moreover, these stelae, in contrast to the Gökçeler

example, display elements of the Persian lifestyle in Anatolia, including banquets, *ekphora* (funeral processions) and hunting scenes. The Gökçeler relief depicts a lone figure presenting gifts to the tomb owner. Iconographically, the gifts held by the figure are western Anatolian and Greek in origin, but the garment he wears is clearly of Persian influence. The Gökçeler relief is a distinctive product of the artistic synthesis classified as Graeco-Persian or Anatolian-Persian.

This work owes its importance to its uniqueness in being the only known Anatolian-Persian sculptural work portraying an African figure discovered to date in Anatolia. Having a lovely young figure bearing erotic and fragrant gifts on a relief is normal for this part of the world; having him be African is highly unusual. In this context, the Gökçeler relief is a unique work for being a concrete example indicating the multiracial social structure of the Lydia region during the late sixth to early fifth century BC.

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