

Ancient Quarries and Stonemasonry in Northern Choria Considiana

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ANCIENT QUARRIES AND STONEMASONRY IN NORTHERN CHORIA CONSIDIANA

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Abstract

This paper presents the preliminary results of an epigraphic survey of a Roman imperial estate carried out in 2014-2015 in northern Choria Considiana, today encompassing Mihalıççık County in Eskişehir located between the Sakarya (Sangarios) river to the north and the Porsuk (Tembris) river to the south. The paper concentrates on two new funerary inscriptions found *in situ* in the Çalçak Roman necropolis, 4 km distant from Dinek village in Mihalıççık, on the northern edge of Choria Considiana as well as stone quarries and stonemasonry in the region. It begins by laying out the geographic, geological and historical backgrounds of the region and then evaluates new inscriptions including their interpretation. It ends with a conclusion.

Keywords

Choria Considiana, Phrygia, Galatia, Mihalıççık

Until the recent discovery of fifty inscriptions during the surveys carried out since 2014 (see the ‘Acknowledgements’ section, below, for details of the project), very little was known about Choria Considiana, an extensive imperial estate in Central Anatolia. An epigraphic survey being conducted in one area of this estate has revealed fifty new inscriptions, which are mostly dateable to the second century AD. These inscriptions provide some new information about the social and economic status of the inhabitants of this region.

Including the majority of Mihalıççık and Beylikova Counties, Choria Considiana was located to the south of Sarıyar Dam including all the villages surveyed in 2014-2015 to the east of Alpu, and the north of Sivrihisar and the northeast of Mahmudiye Counties in Eskişehir province.¹ Located in the northwestern part of the province of Galatia, this estate was situated to the east of the

ancient cities of Dorylaion (modern Eskişehir), Midaion and Akkilaion (perhaps located near Alpu) which were apparently part of the province of Asia neighbouring on Bithynia and Galatia.² The Sangarius River separated the estate from Bithynia. The closest city was Juliopolis on the Bithynian-Galatian border. Babadat, Mülk and Nasreddin Hoca villages, which are northeast of modern Sivrihisar, formed the northwestern part of the territory of Colonia Germa which was located in the province of Galatia.³ The ancient villages of Akreina (İkizafer/İkikilise)⁴ and Phyle (Beyköy), to the east of Choria Considiana were apparently part of another estate, belonging to the Roman senatorial family of the Plancii.⁵ Both estates had as neighbours the small cities of Akkilaion, and Colonia Germa, as well as Juliopolis.⁶

An inscription previously found in Yukarı İğde Ağaç in Beylikova County, to the south of Mihalıççık County, mentions the Choria Considiana, an estate originally owned by a family of Italian origin which passed into imperial hands.⁷ Another inscription also found in Yukarı İğde Ağaç was carved on a votive altar to Zeus by priests and priestesses on behalf of seven villages that worshipped Zeus as their chief deity.⁸ Finally, another inscription found in Yukarı İğde Ağaç records the erection of a temple (naos) and statues dedicated by Eutyches, *oikonomos* of the estate under Marcus Aurelius and Commodus between AD 177-180.⁹ The estate under consideration in this study therefore encompassed the territory of at least seven villages (Heptakomia), and was run by an imperial slave *oikonomos*.

1 TALBERT 2000, Phrygia, Map 62. <https://pleiades.stoa.org/places/609442> (access date: 26/09/2018).

2 RAMSAY 1890, 225-236; AULOCK 1980, 42-44.

3 MITCHELL 1974, 30-31; NIEWÖHNER *et al.* 2013, 104.

4 BELKE 1984, 120; 175-6; 215.

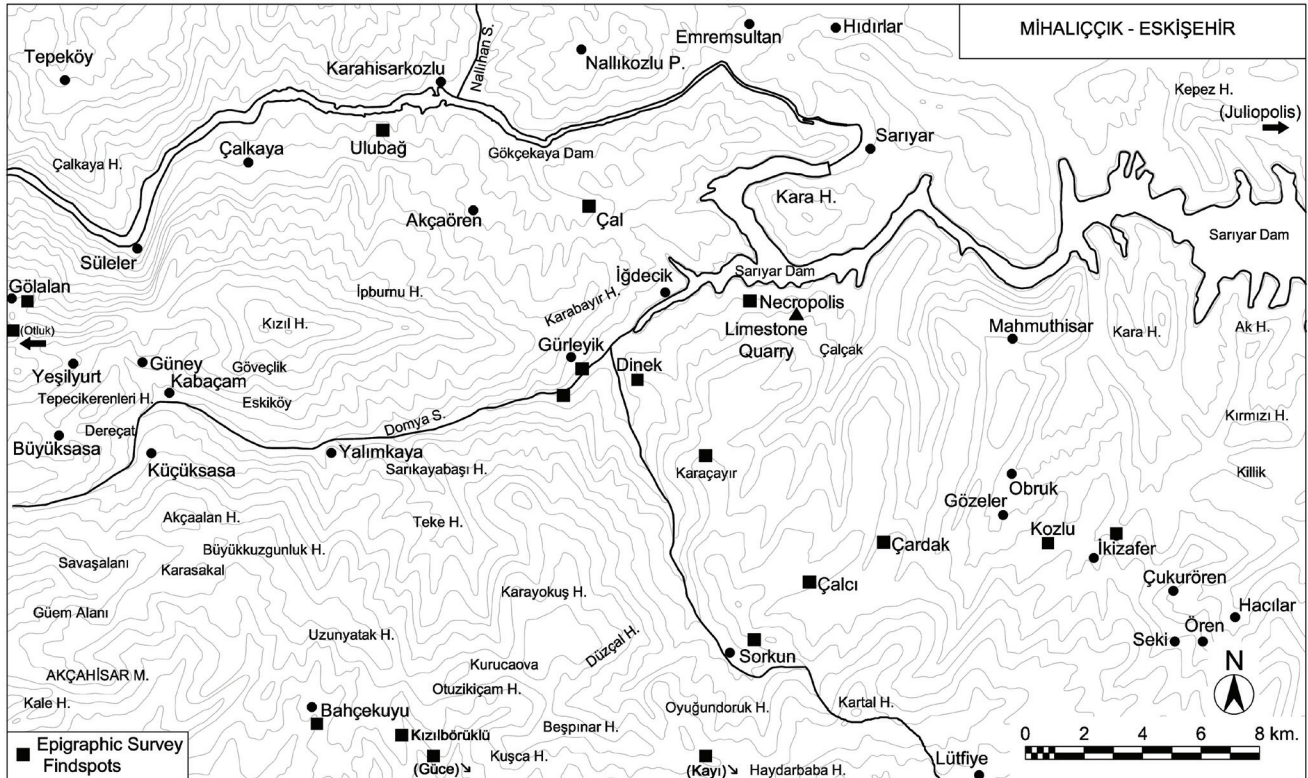
5 MITCHELL 1974, 27-39.

6 GÜNEY 2016, 129.

7 RECAM II, 34, 36, 37; SEG 1982, 1263.

8 RECAM II, 37; MITCHELL 1993, 23-24.

9 RECAM II, 34, 36.



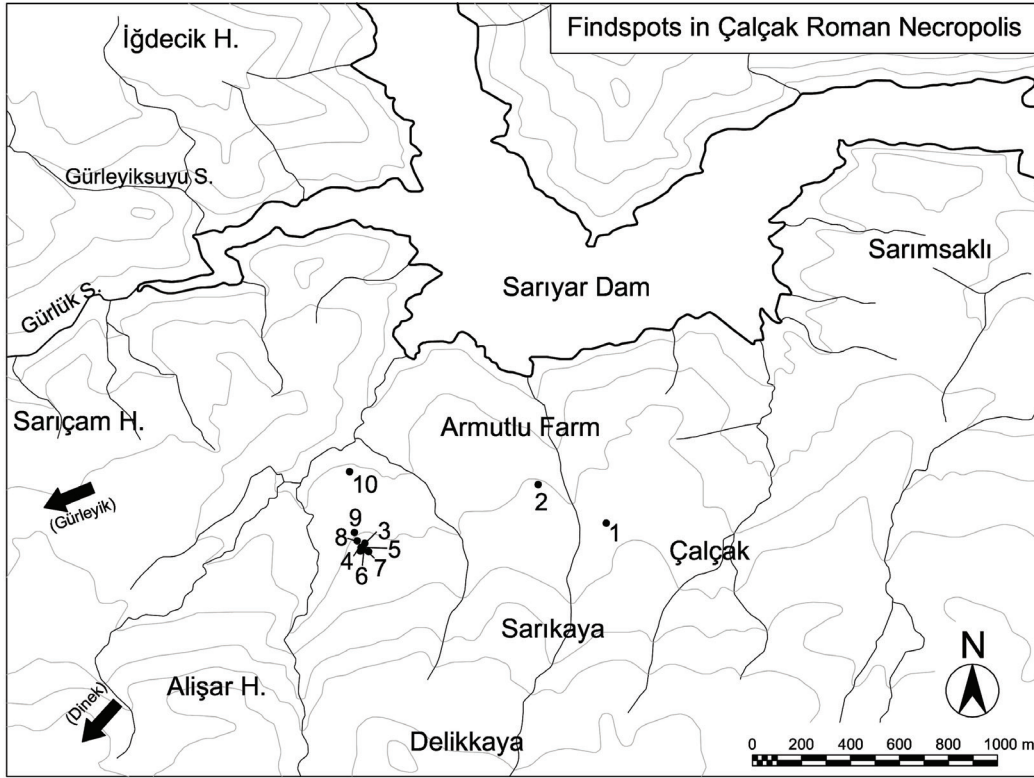


Fig. 2.
Epigraphic findspots
in the Çalçak
Roman necropolis,
near Dinek village in
Mihaliçcik County
(Eskişehir, Turkey)
(map: E. Denктаş)



Fig. 3. The landscape at Çalçak (Mihaliçcik, Eskişehir)
(photo: H. Güney)



Fig. 4. Unfinished cut stone in the Çalçak Roman
necropolis (Mihaliçcik, Eskişehir) (photo: H. Güney)

The area surveyed in 2014-2015 covered almost all the villages in the Mihaliçcik district including Gürleyik, Akçaören, Çalçı, Çardak, Dinek, Sorkun, Kayı, Güce, Kozlu, İkizafer, Yalım kaya, Kızıl börüklü and Otluk and their territories (w. 1). Ten of the fifty inscriptions found in this survey came from a necropolis situated close to a limestone quarry at Çalçak, a site 4 km distant from Dinek village in Mihaliçcik (Figs. 2-3). The Çalçak Roman necropolis is located south of Armutlu Farm (350 m), north-east of Dinek village (3600 m) and north-east of Gürleyik village (4230 m) and was detected during an illegal excavation and registered as Roman settlement

and necropolis in 2008.¹⁷ There are also many unfinished cut stones observed in and around the necropolis (Fig. 4). Apparently, most of the stone used was extracted from the geological units which supply different kinds of marble and limestone frequently observed in the region. One of the geological units located in close proximity to the Çalçak necropolis (400-500 m) provides limestone, and possible extraction areas were observed during the 2015 survey

17 <http://www.eskisehirkulturenvanteri.gov.tr/sitdetay.aspx?ID=155>, (access date: 26/09/2018).



Fig. 5.
Possible extraction
area in Çalçak quarry
(Mihalıççık, Eskişehir)
(photo: E. Yanık)



Fig. 6.
Possible extraction
area in Çalçak quarry
(Mihalıççık, Eskişehir)
(photo: M. Dirican)

(Figs. 5-6). The Çalçak quarry material seems to be dated to the lower-middle Miocene epoch, including lacustrine limestone, marl and shale. One of inscriptions which will be discussed in this study and a few architectural elements found in the necropolis area seem to be made of limestone.¹⁸ Unfinished cut stones support the conclusion that the stone was extracted from that quarry, shaped and finally used in a burial context. As the quarry was on the hill, it was easy to transport the stone down to the necropolis.

During the 2015 survey, samples both from the inscriptions and geological units in Çalçak were collected for further archaeometric analysis. Our team discovered a marble quarry, approximately 30 km away from Çalçak, in Otluk village where traces of extraction can be seen clearly (Figs. 7-9). There is an archaeological site including a Byzantine church registered in Kayapınar in Otluk village.¹⁹ Here stelae bearing inscriptions and also stelae only with depictions have been found. The remains

18 GÜNEY 2016, 129.

19 SIVAS-SIVAS 2005, 40.



Fig. 7. Extraction traces in a marble quarry in Kayapınar, near Otluk village (Mihaliççık, Eskişehir) (photo: M. Dirican)



Fig. 8. Extraction traces in a marble quarry in Kayapınar, near Otluk village, (Mihaliççık, Eskişehir) (photo: M. Dirican)



Fig. 9. Extraction traces in a marble quarry in Kayapınar, near Otluk village, (Mihaliççık, Eskişehir) (photo: M. Dirican)

of a church and some marble blocks are still visible. The marble used in Kayapınar had presumably been extracted from the quarry in close proximity to the site.

As mentioned above, the presence of the temple on the estate, funerary inscriptions within the burial complex and stone quarries lead us to assume the existence of a local stonemasonry tradition that developed to serve the local taste as well as of professions related to quarries. Although no direct reference to any profession or attribution related to stonemasonry has been discovered, two inscriptions presumably dated to the second century AD and found in Çalçak necropolis bear depictions of a hammer or pick, perhaps a *malleus* or a *dolabra*.

The first inscription, engraved on a rectangular grey marble stela with plain mouldings at top and bottom, broken at the top right and lower edges, was erected for Loukios by Mania and Pasion and shows a *malleus*, a kind of hammer, incised below the inscription (Figs. 10-12).²⁰

The poor orthography is an indication of freehand cutting which is not the case in general. In other cases the stonemasons ruled the stone with guidelines before engraving the text in order to prevent uneven lines. Loukios' epitaph seems not to have followed guidelines. The commemorators of Loukios, either his parents or his children, possibly engraved the stone by themselves. Indeed there were people physically cutting an inscription and people composing a draft to be engraved or helping the engraver to compose it dictating the text.²¹ A verse epitaph of the fourth century AD found in Phrygian Eumeneia shows that the owner of the tomb carved the stone and wrote the epitaph himself with his wife Nonna.²² The text makes clear that the verses were composed by the dedicator of the stone and it has been suggested that some epitaphs in Asia Minor were composed by the peasant families themselves and they relied on a repetitive repertoire of poetic expressions.²³ There are repetitive expressions in epigrams found in Çalçak necropolis and it may well be considered within same phenomena.²⁴

In other cases, however, for example, in Axylon region, the East Phrygian steppe to the west of Lake Tatta in the Roman province of Galatia, we certainly are dealing with 'local poets' – perhaps village school-teachers and suchlike – who were asked to compose verse epitaphs by other members of their communities. The quality of their compositions is very varied.²⁵

20 GÜNEY 2016, 131, no. 2.

21 McLEAN 2002, 9-10.

22 IPhrygChr 70, no. 27; McLEAN 2002, 10.

23 MITCHELL 1993 2, 105.

24 GÜNEY 2016, nos. 3-4, 9.

25 THONEMANN 2014, 191-225.



Fig. 10. Epitaph of Loukios (photo: H. Güney)

As there is no further analysis on epigrams from Çalçak and no further evidence, it is difficult to say whether the engraver from stonemason community or local poets composed those epigrams.

The second inscription was carved on another stele erected by Narkissos, Sosias, Soteris, Fronto and Hippomedon for their parents, Korinthos and Eutykhia. This is a rectangular grey limestone stele, broken in two, with a four-petalled rosette in a triangular pediment with ornaments on the right and left and apparently with a *dolabra*, a kind of pick, depicted below the inscription (Figs. 13-15).²⁶ The stone used for the epitaph seems to be limestone, which was possibly provided from limestone quarry here. However, provenance analysis is needed for certainty.

Starting with an examination of the stonemasons' tools, the malleus on the first stela was an essential tool for stone dressing. The malleus therefore can be understood literally and it was the main tool used by Loukios for his trade as a quarryman. When it comes to the *dolabra* on the second stela it was used for squaring the stone. The *dolabra* also must be the main tool used by the four brothers for their trade as quarrymen. Perhaps their father,



Fig. 11-12. A detail from the stela with a hammer (malleus) depicted below the inscription. Çalçak Roman necropolis (Mihaliçcik, Eskişehir) (photo: H. Güney)

Korinthos, was also a quarryman. These two inscriptions may indicate a stonemasonry tradition in the region.

Indeed, Gerhard Zimmer's investigation of the pictorial representations shows that work with hammer and chisel was an essential attribute of stonemasonry. However, one can only speak of a professional symbol if the statement of the device is clearly defined by the inscription or by the tool context. It is not possible to determine the exact profession of the deceased due to the combination of devices. In some cases, it is not even possible to gain any certainty about the affiliation to the craft of stonemasonry. Measuring instruments were also indispensable in the construction business.²⁷ Zimmer counts inscriptions with stone carvers' tools including hammer, mason's level, chisel compass, square and straightedge from Italy. Among them one stela from Reggio d'Emilia bears an inscription indicating both the profession of a marble worker and his tools including hammer, chisel and ruler (no. 91). The other examples found in Rome, Aquileia and Bari do not name the profession on the inscriptions but depict measuring tools, hammer, chisel and so on (Nos. 92, 93, 95, 96). He concludes that

²⁶ GÜNEY 2016, 135-136, no. 8.

²⁷ ZIMMER 1982, 161.



Fig. 13. Epitaph of Korinthos and Eutykhia (photo: E. Yanık)

these monuments only make a general reference to the building and construction business. It is unclear whether the person commemorated was a marble worker, an architect, a construction manager or an engineer.²⁸ Among those inscriptions however there is one inscription (no. 92) which bears a very famous family name, Cossutius, although it does not mention their profession. The Cossutii were in fact a very wealthy family that appears to have been involved in building, stone supply and



Fig. 14-15. A detail from the stela with a pick (dolabra) described below the inscription. Çalçak Roman necropolis (Mihaliççık, Eskişehir) (photo: E. Yanık)

carving over an extended period of almost four hundred years.²⁹ Çalçak, on the other hand, was a traditional village

29 RUSSELL 2013, 205. The first member of this family known to us was Decimus Cossutius who was the architect lived in the second century BC. Members of this family are attested in Erythrae, Ios, Paros, Kos and Eretria and mostly they were involved in building and stone supply. Later period, freedmen of the Cossutii are known from signatures on three inscriptions from Italy in the first century BC. An M. Cossutius is recorded as *marmorarius* on a first century A.D. inscription from Pisa.

28 ZIMMER 1982, 166-167.

community close to a quarry and it would not be surprising if members of a family or several families were active in the quarry over two or three generations. Although there is a big difference between the contexts of Çalçak people and the Cossutii, it is visible that stone-carvers' tools are depicted on the funerary inscription from Rome set up by Cn. Cossutius Agathangelus for his wife Cossutia Arescusa and his brother Cn. Cossutius Cladus in the second century A.D.³⁰

To our knowledge in the region under consideration, there are two stonemasons attested in İnönü County to the west of modern Eskişehir, which is approximately 160 km away from Çalçak necropolis.³¹ Here, two stonemasons were proud of setting up a votive altar on behalf of their village, Sakle. There is no tool on the altar but their professions can be seen on the inscription. Another marble worker attested in Ancyra can be counted here.³² As for Docimeum quarry, there were two brother sculptors (Dokimatoglyphoi) attested in Iconium although depictions of tools do not exist.³³ Moreover, epigraphic records also provide multiple generations who are involved in the same business, stonemasonry. Interestingly a funerary altar from Kirgil in Kütahya (Tiberiopolis in Phrygia) shows a stonemason Euprepes mentioning his father and mother as people who trained his trade.³⁴

Considering all those possibility, first, we cannot talk about a quarrymen or stonemason community only based on two stelae although they bear the main tools for stone dressing. In our context, however, there are stone quarries in the survey area, even one at walking distance to Çalçak necropolis, and there is a considerable level of marble use in architectural and religious contexts in this very corner of Roman Asia Minor. This leads us to think of a stonemason community in Çalçak as will be further examined below.

Secondly, some scholars believed that hammer depicted on epitaphs is an *ascia* and it conveyed a religious and ritual significance.³⁵ However this is another issue related to regional differences in terms of epigraphic material. This difference will shed some light on our case study in Roman Phrygia. In general there is the rarity of

occupational identity statements in antiquity, a topic examined by Valerie Hope in the cases of Aquileia, Mainz and Nimes.³⁶ The majority of inscriptions provide only names and images and reveal little about how people earned their living. Even when the epigraphic evidence is complemented by pictorial elements, only a minority of the funerary monuments carry images related to the decedents' work.³⁷ In antiquity for many reasons people refrained from indicating their professions, which reflects their social status.³⁸ As studied by Sandra Joshel, professions like trader, dealer and servant were thought to be involved in some unclean business.³⁹ According to Zimmer, among the stonemasons perhaps marble workers can be separated as a group since they worked with expensive material. They were probably also responsible for more difficult and prestigious tasks, so that they must be granted a higher social rank.⁴⁰

Grave and votive monuments from Phrygia – especially rural Phrygia – are unusual in comparison with those from most of the rest of the Ancient World in that they regularly display agricultural and other tools, and thus show Phrygians' pride in their way of life.⁴¹ It had been suggested by Marc Waelkens that visual references to agriculture, grazing and viticulture on Phrygian grave monuments need a more literal interpretation.⁴² Jane Masségli more recently studied the implications of this for iconography. Her analysis highlights the fact that Phrygian reliefs reflect biographical props and features including households with in-laws and adopted children.⁴³ As stressed by Stephen Mitchell, "So, already in three important respects, through the visual depiction of the tools of farmers, domestic textile workers and other artisans, through the foregrounding of literacy and through the presentation of elaborate, multi-generational family structures, the funerary inscriptions of inner Anatolia offer a quite different perspective on Roman provincial society from that provided by civic epigraphy."⁴⁴ As

30 RUSSELL 2013, 205.

31 FREI 1988, 25, no. 12.

32 SEG 27, 883.

33 HALL-WAELKENS 1982, 151-155.

34 RUSSELL 2013, 346.

35 WALTERS 1974, 86; cf. McLEAN 2002, 7 fn. 17; SUSINI 1973, 26: "the *ascia* is the visual expression of the tool abandoned on the tomb at the moment of completion-abandoned because together with the tomb itself, it has become sacred to the chthonic deities". For the case of Roman Gaul, see HAEUSSLER 2014, 323-347.

36 HOPE 2001.

37 HOPE 2001, 57.

38 HOPE 2001, 57. "This can be interpreted in a variety of ways: they did nothing, they took no pride in what they did, they were ashamed of what they did or their occupation had no relevance or importance in the face of death."

39 JOSHEL 1992, 62-71.

40 ZIMMER 1982, 166-167.

41 MITCHELL 2014a, 271-275; 2014b, 275-299.

42 WAELKENS 1986, 131-141; WAELKENS 1977, 277-315.

43 MASSÉGLIA 2013, 122-123.

44 MITCHELL 2014a, 279; for the difference between the urban and rural epigraphy see, MITCHELL 2014b.

is seen, we are dealing with an idiosyncratic region in terms of epigraphic material. For that reason hammer depictions should be interpreted as the main tool used by the quarryman community in Çalçak.

When it comes to social status of those people, in our inscriptions with hammer depictions, there are only single names, which are usually the sign of a slave or non-citizen.⁴⁵ In Çalçak necropolis only one inscription indicates a freedman name among ten inscriptions. Besides this, all names mentioned in the inscriptions are single names and two inscriptions clearly show family ties between commemorated and commemorators.⁴⁶ The inscriptions that we found in Çalçak necropolis and in Mihaliçcik County seem to cover only a few names of Roman citizen freedmen, and other single Latin names occur.⁴⁷ Personal names and epigrams on inscriptions found indicate a relatively wealthy and culturally intelligent community.⁴⁸ Like other families attested in Yukarı İğde Ağaç, the people buried in Çalçak may have been members of the families running the northern part of this imperial estate.⁴⁹

For the hypothesis that there was a community of quarrymen or stonemasons in Çalçak and surroundings another set of evidence again comes from inscriptions. In our survey in 2015 a votive inscription to Zeus Sarnendenos was attested in a village a few km away from Çalçak necropolis. Another fragmentary inscription found in the same village provides a temple that belonged to Zeus Sarnendenos.⁵⁰ Zeus Sarnendenos, Zeus Narenos and Zeus Akreinenos were the cults that originated in our survey area.⁵¹ Votive inscriptions to Zeus Akreinenos are also attested in another village in close proximity to Çalçak necropolis found during the 2015 survey. More interestingly votive inscriptions to Zeus Sarnendenos and Narenos have also been found in mining areas in Alburnus Maior and Apulum in Dacia.⁵² Sorin Nemeti in his article on Zeus Sarnendenos mentions the existence of Galatian immigrant communities who

carried their cult to Dacia.⁵³ An article written by Mitchell reveals another cult of Jupiter Erusenus that originated from Galatia but is also attested in Dacia. Mitchell concludes that those people who made a vow to Jupiter Erusenus in Dacia were part of the community that migrated from Galatia to this newly conquered territory under Trajan.⁵⁴ The rich natural resources including gold and marble in this new territory could only be exploited by a labour force skilled in stone and marble working. As is known, the most prominent gold mines were at Ampelum (Zlatna) and the administrative centres of the territory at Alburnus Maior (Roşi Montana) and Brucla (Aiud).⁵⁵ Dacia was also very rich in salt mines and stone and marble quarries. The largest quarry of marble which was used in the Roman period is at Bucova which is 1 km away from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa and major marble supplier for this city.⁵⁶ This quarry was 100 km from Apulum and 170 km from Alburnus Maior, where votive inscriptions to Zeus Sarnendenos were found. It is worth verifying whether there is any evidence that these were exploited by quarrymen from Asia Minor. According to archaeometric research conducted in Dacia, exploitation of the Bucova quarry started shortly after the foundation of the province under Trajan. Judging from pedestal bases from the forum at Sarmizegetusa and the statue of Emperor Septimius Severus, artists and sculptors were recruited to this quarry from Asia Minor.⁵⁷ Moreover, the existence of Nicomedian marble workers, sculptors and traders who are attested in funerary inscriptions in Dacia proves the ongoing relationships between Dacia and Asia Minor.⁵⁸ To sum up, people who were attested in quarry areas in Dacia in the votive inscriptions to Zeus Sarnendenos may have come from the same quarryman community in the Çalçak Roman necropolis.

To conclude, our samples collected from the survey area require a further provenance analysis (thin section, XRD, ICP-MS etc), as well as petrographic, chemical and statistical analyses to reveal to what extent the quarries in the region have been exploited. Although it is difficult to answer many of them, this discovery throws

45 HOPE 2001, 21.

46 GÜNEY 2016, nos. 3-4.

47 GÜNEY 2016, 129.

48 GÜNEY 2016, nos. 1, 3-4, 9.

49 GÜNEY 2016, 129.

50 GÜNEY, forthcoming, "The Sanctuary of Zeus Sarnendenos: The Cult of Zeus in Northeast Phrygia" *Anatolian Studies* 69 (2019).

51 These epithets were toponyms indicating the settlements called Sarnenda, Akreina and Nara in our survey area.

52 PISO 2018.

53 NEMETI 2008, 179-183.

54 MITCHELL 2017, 15-21, also see PISO 2018, 37-70.

55 GĂZDAC 2010, 60-61.

56 GĂZDAC 2010, 60-61.

57 MÜLLER *et al.* 1999, 139. Along with skilled people, marble from Marmara, Uşak and Afyon was also attested in Dacia.

58 Sculptors at Nicopolis ad Istrum: *IGBulg* II: 674 and at Tirguşor near Constanza: *CIMRM* II 2306-2307; shipowners at Tomi, *CIL* III Supp. 7532; traders at Tomi: ROBERT 1978, 424.

up many questions such as: How were the quarries operated? How much of the stone used for the inscriptions found in the region is from the nearby quarry? What was the economic value of the quarries for the estate, the Choria Considiana?⁵⁹ Secondly a detailed survey on votive inscriptions belonging to the Zeus cult originated from Galatia but found in the Balkans may provide some details about quarryman/stonemason community. The results may help us in answering the questions raised about the economic resources and activities of the Roman Imperial estate, as well as provide us with information about an unknown quarryman/stonemason community in Choria Considiana.

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59 GÜNEY 2016, 130.

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