

GEMSTONES DEPICTING HERMES FROM ASIA MINOR IN THE ROMAN IMPERIAL PERIOD

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Abstract: This study presents an assemblage of 36 artefacts, including 34 gems and two clay bullae, compiled from Anatolian museums, private collections, and archaeological excavations. The study is focused on the formal and functional characteristics of Hermes iconography in ancient Anatolian glyptic art. The artefacts are analysed in terms of material (gold, silver, iron, bronze, and various semi-precious stones), dimensions, and cutting techniques, which results in eight main iconographic types. In light of the findings from the Juliopolis necropolis, it is argued that dating gems solely on the basis of stylistic features can sometimes be misleading; examples with poor workmanship belonging to the Hadrianic period are attributed to urgent production needs in provincial workshops. Of the 36 artefacts presented in the catalogue, nine contain iconographic details that have not been previously identified in the literature or that are rarely seen (e.g., bearded or clothed Hermes, ithyphallic Hermes holding a phiale, pantheistic Ares/Hermes combinations). These new types are significant because they reveal local Anatolian variations of Hermes iconography and expand the iconographic diversity in Anatolian glyptic art. On the basis of these findings, the study aims to provide a new perspective on regional workshop production practices and the belief system regarding these portable cultural assets, which functioned simultaneously as jewellery, seals, and talismans.

Cuvinte-cheie: artă glicptică anatóliană, iconografia lui Hermes, pietre de inel (geme), tipologie, necropola Juliopolis

Rezumat: În articolul de față este analizat un lot de 36 de artefacte, compus din 34 de pietre prețioase și două sigilii din lut, provenite din muzee din Anatólia, colecții private și săpături arheologice. Studiul se concentrează asupra caracteristicilor formale și funcționale ale iconografiei lui Hermes în arta glicptică din Anatólia antică. Artefactele sunt clasificate din punct de vedere al materialului (aur, argint, fier, bronz și diverse pietre semiprețioase), al dimensiunilor și al tehnicilor de tăiere, rezultând opt tipuri iconografice principale. Pe baza descoperirilor din necropola de la Juliopolis, se demonstrează că datarea pietrelor prețioase exclusiv pe baza trăsăturilor stilistice poate fi uneori înșelătoare; exemplarele cu o tehnică de realizare calitativ slabă din perioada domniei lui Hadrian sunt atribuite nevoilor urgente de producție din atelierele provinciale, ca urmare a cererii mari. Dintre cele 36 de artefacte prezentate în catalog, nouă conțin detalii iconografice care nu au fost identificate anterior în literatura de specialitate sau sunt rare (de exemplu, Hermes cu barbă sau îmbrăcat, Hermes itifalic ținând o phială, combinații sincretice Ares/Hermes). Aceste noi tipuri sunt semnificative atât pentru că dezvăluie variațiile locale anatóliene ale iconografiei lui Hermes, cât și pentru că extind diversitatea iconografică în arta glicptică anatóliană. Pe baza acestor descoperiri, studiul își propune să ofere o nouă perspectivă asupra practicilor de producție ale atelierelor regionale și asupra sistemelor de credință legate de aceste artefacte, care îndeplineau simultan funcțiile de bijuterii, sigilii și talismane.

INTRODUCTION

In this study, 36 objects depicting Hermes and dating to the Roman Imperial period (1st–3rd centuries AD) are presented: 34 gems and two clay bullae. A total of 21 gems are from the collections of Ankara museums: 19 from the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, one from the Erimtan Archaeology and Art Museum, and one from the private collection of Gaye Çarmıklı in Ankara. In addition to these, 13 gems are from various state museums, and two clay seal impressions are from the Murat Uğurluer collection in Gaziantep. Of the 36 gems, 30 are natural stones, four are glass, and two are clay seal impressions. Sixteen of these are set in rings, while 18 are loose gems without ring hoops. The four glass ring stones presented here are from the collection of the Uşak Museum, within the borders of the ancient Lydia region.

The aim of this study is to examine the gems depicting Hermes in Turkish museums and private collections from an iconographic perspective and to investigate their contributions to Anatolian glyptic art. In the study, detailed descriptions of the iconographic depictions of Hermes on engraved stones, glass, and clay seal impressions are provided in a catalogue, and the existence of new, hitherto unknown iconographic representations of Hermes has been determined. Among these new types are those where Hermes is depicted side by side with other gods and goddesses, as well as pantheistic depictions of Hermes either alone or with other deities.

Although the vast majority of the artefacts presented here were found in Anatolian lands, their find contexts cannot be known with certainty as they entered museums and private collections through purchase. In particular, the fact that modern Ankara encompasses the ancient