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Fatih YILMAZ*

New Christian Epitaphs from Yozgat

ABSTRACT: From the 1920's onwards in Yozgat and its vicinity in the interior of Asia Minor field surveys and excavations have been increasingly undertaken. One recent project is an archaeological survey of the whole province of Yozgat which began in 2017 with the participation of many academics from different universities and disciplines. Through this survey, which covers a large area, research in just a few regions has been completed. In this article, seventeen Christian epitaphs discovered at and around the village of Güneşli (east of Tavium), Aydınçık, Basilika Therma (Sarıkaya) and Çayıralan, mostly dating from the Vth–VIth centuries A.D. are presented. Three of them are fragmentary and a few are badly damaged. A carved bilingual Latin/Greek inscription records the «running» metaphor frequently employed by the Apostle Paul, all the other inscriptions introduced are Greek. There are interesting differences and analogies for the motifs on these gravestones and for the formulas employed in the epitaphs within the surrounding region.

KEYWORDS: Yozgat, Tavium, Christian Epitaph, Runner, Apostle Paul, Byzantine Epigraphy.

The project entitled «Archaeological Survey in Yozgat and its Districts» has been conducted since 2017 by a team led by Dr. Hacer Sancaktar from Bozok University with the permission of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.¹ The survey includes the whole area of the province of Yozgat situated at the borders of the regions defined in antiquity as Galatia, Pontus, and Cappadocia. The dominant settlement patterns in the survey area are rural villages, the only settlement of urban character is Tavium (Büyüknefes), which lies in the northwest part of the Province. Despite the fact that epigraphic surveys in the region are similarly restricted, inscriptions have been increasingly recorded there by travellers and scholars since the 19th century.² Some corpora, catalogues and articles with epigraphic content from the modern province have recently presented a general view of Byzantine Period of the field: In 1982, Stephen Mitchell included the inscriptions of western Yozgat in his catalogue entitled «The Ankara District: The Inscriptions of North Galatia» (RECAM II). Later, in 2007, David French recorded many inscriptions from museums in Yozgat and in the surrounding provinces.³ Finally, in 2011, a corpus of the Yozgat Museum with a collection of inscriptions from various areas in the city was edited by Christian Wallner.⁴

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¹ For the first report of the survey see Sancaktar et al. 2019. The settlements within the borders of Yozgat date from the Late Chalcolithic Age and continued through the Iron Age. In some areas, this chronology continued into the Late Roman and Byzantine periods. For the detailed research history of Yozgat concerning these periods see Strobel – Gerber 2000, 215–224 and Sancaktar et al. 2019, 142–145.

² For the history of epigraphic research at Yozgat see I.Yozgat pp.15–16.

³ In addition to his many epigraphic studies, especially on the ancient road systems, D. French (2007, 70–72) has published various Byzantine inscriptions from Sorgun, Sarıkaya, Akdağmadeni, and Çayıralan within the borders of the province Yozgat.

⁴ Wallner provided an addendum to his book entitled «Die Inschriften des Museums in Yozgat» in 2015. He also published some inscriptions from surveys around Tavium, see Wallner 2017. The last publication contains the newly found Christian epitaphs from the same place, see his article in this volume.

In the bilingual epitaph no. 15 found near Basilika Therma (Sarikaya), the expressions both «curre; curro / τρέχεις; τρέχω» and «ubique; ubi usque / ἕως ποῦ; ἕως ὧδε» refer to some passages from the Bible. The Apostle Paul, in particular, uses it as a metaphor, that life is a race and running aims to approach God and an eternal life. Although very similar examples in Greek have emerged from different regions, this is the first to be documented in Latin. Not only this inscription, but also some Christian gravestones from Aydıncık support a message from the Holy Bible through the motifs employed. On these gravestones, the vine branches that come out from the top and bottom of the cross and are curved inwards symbolize the narrative provided in passages in the Bible. While Jesus describes himself as the vine, those who believed in him are his branches, as in the Gospels of the New Testament (Ev. Jo. 15.5: ἐγὼ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος, ὑμεῖς τὰ κλήματα). The carving of four vine branches from the cross on the grave stele probably served to indicate this, as is the case with some of the other inscriptions presented here, that repeat this motif: nos. 6–8, 10, 12–14.²¹

Finally, unfortunately none of the inscriptions presented here was found in situ. Most of them were reused as spolia by local people in gardens and stables. However, the names on the stones still may contribute in defining the demographic and onomastic structure of the areas. In this context, four inscriptions carry a female name (nos. 1, 6, 12 and 14), ten name a man (nos. 2–4, 7–8, 10–11, 13, 16–17). The names on three inscriptions cannot be determined (nos. 5, 9, and 15). The disappearance of family members indicates the transformation in social and family traditions. On epitaphs of the Vth and VIth centuries, family members are rarely mentioned; instead, two phrases, namely πάντων φίλος and δούλος τοῦ θεοῦ, were fairly widespread, as in the above examples nos. 1, 2 and 3.

Abbreviated Literature

Acts Christian Martyrs	H. Musurillo, <i>The Acts of the Christian Martyrs. Introduction, Texts and Translations</i> , Oxford 2000.
Anderson 1899	J. G. C. Anderson, <i>Exploration in Galatia cis Halym</i> , JHS 19, 1899, 280–318.
Bodel 1992	J. Bodel, <i>Thirteen Latin Funerary Inscriptions at Harvard University</i> , AJA 96/1, 1992, 71–100.
Bull. ép	Bulletin épigraphique.
CIG	Corpus inscriptionum graecarum. 4 vols. Berlin 1828–1877.
Drew-Bear 1981	Th. Drew-Bear, <i>Les voyages d'Aurélius Gaius, soldat de Dioclétien</i> , in: <i>La Géographie administrative et politique d'Alexandre à Mahomet: Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg 14–16 juin 1979</i> , Strasbourg 1981, 93–142.
Feissel 1995	D. Feissel, <i>Notes d'épigraphie chrétienne (X)</i> , BCH 119, 1995, 375–389.
Felle 2014	A. E. Felle, <i>Expressions of Hope Quoted from Biblical Texts in Christian Funerary Inscriptions (3rd–7th cent. C.E.)</i> , in: W. Kraus – S. Kreuzer (eds.), <i>Die Septuaginta – Text, Wirkung, Rezeption: 4. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D)</i> , Wuppertal 19.–22. Juli 2012, Tübingen 2014, 775–824.
French 1990	D. French, <i>Roma Yolları, Miltaşları ve Yazıtları Araştırması</i> , AST 8, 1990, 229–240.
French 2007	D. French, <i>Inscriptions from Cappadocia II. Museums of Yozgat, Kırşehir, Hacibektaş, Nevşehir, Ürgüp, Aksaray, Konya Ereğlisi, Kayseri, Sivas</i> , EA 40, 2007, 67–108.
Gignac 1976	F. T. Gignac, <i>A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods: Phonology</i> , vol. I, Milan 1976.
Hicks 1891	E. L. Hicks, <i>Inscriptions from Western Cilicia</i> , JHS 12, 1891, 225–273.
Hornickel 1930	O. Hornickel, <i>Ehren und Rangprädikate in den Papyrusurkunden. Ein Beitrag zum römischen und byzantinischen Titelwesen</i> , Gießen 1930.

²¹ For other examples in Yozgat and in its vicinity see also I.Yozgat 89 no. II. 16; 98 no. III. 2; in Ancyra: I.Ancara II. 352–353; 424–425; in Amaseia: Marek – Adak 2016, 91 no. 97–98; 97 no. 107; in other regions of Asia Minor see MAMA I 213; 362; 370; VII. 90; 104a. For commentary, see also MAMA VII pp. XLI–XLII.

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Yozgat İlinde Yeni Hıristiyan Mezar Yazıtları

ÖZ: Yozgat ve çevresindeki arkeoloji yüzeysel araştırmaları ve kazılar çalışmaları 1920'li yıllardan itibaren artış göstererek devam etmektedir. Bu bağlamda son projelerden bir tanesi de farklı üniversitelerden ve disiplinlerden pek çok akademisyenin katılımıyla 2017 yılında başlatılan ve Yozgat ilinin tamamını kapsayan arkeolojik yüzeysel araştırmalarıdır. Tüm il sınırlarını kapsayan bu araştırmadaki sistematik çalışmalar bazı bölgelerde tamamlanmış durumdadır. Makalede ise Güneşli Köyü, Aydıncık, Sarıkaya ve Çayıralan'da bulunan ve çoğunluğu MS V.–VI. yüzyıllara tarihlenen Hıristiyan mezar yazıtları tanıtılmaktadır. Yazıtlarının bir kısmı sadece fragman halinde ele geçişken, bazıları ise oldukça tahrir olmuş durumda-

dır. Bunlardan birisinin üzerine, Aziz Paulus'un sıkça dile getirdiği «koşmak» metaforu Latince ve Yunanca çift dilli olarak kazanmıştır. Diğer yazıtların tamamı Yunancadır. Söz konusu mezar taşları üzerindeki betimlemelerin ve mezar yazıtlarındaki formüllerin bölgeler arasındaki farklılıkları ise ilgi çekicidir.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER: Yozgat, Tavium, Hıristiyan Mezar Yazıtı, Koşucu, Aziz Paulus, Bizans Epigrafisi.

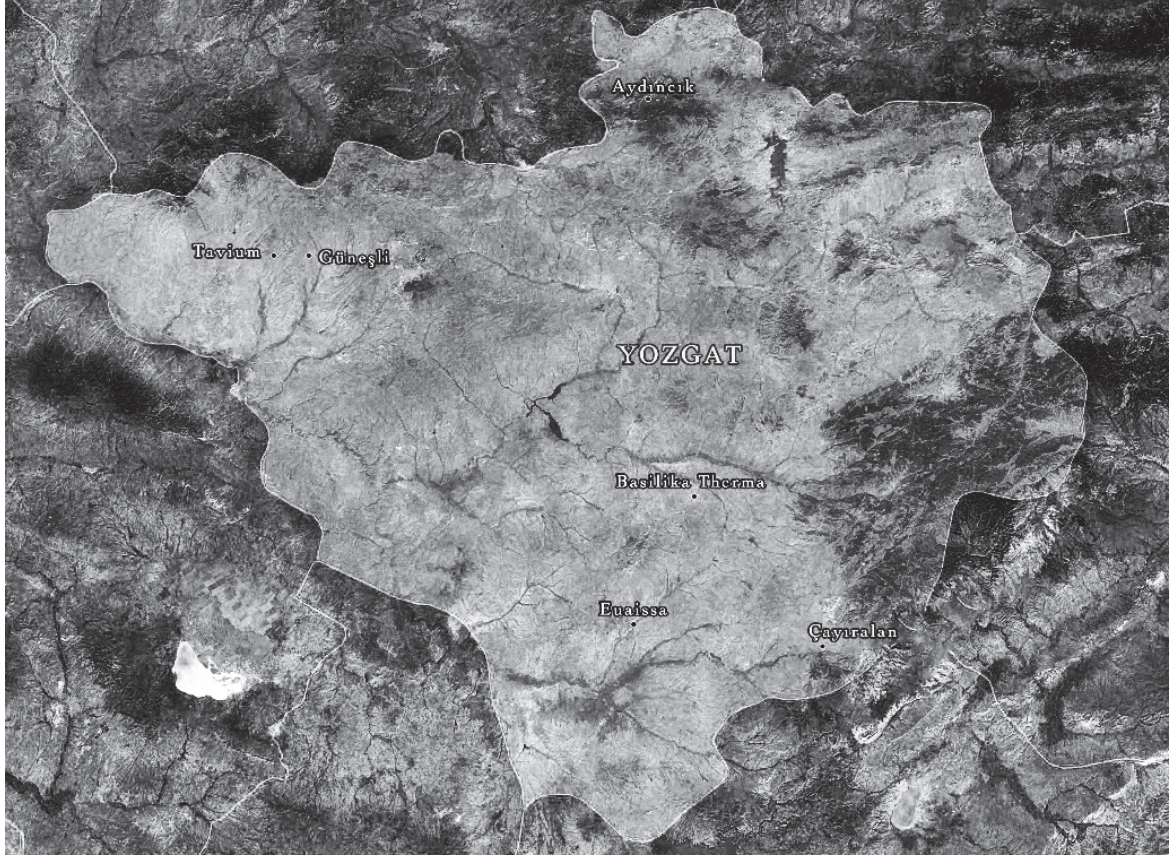


Fig. 1. The Find-spots of the Epitaphs from Yozgat