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Cutting the Gordian knot

The iconography of Megaron 2 at Gordion

Abstract*

This article examines the incised drawings of Early Phrygian Gordion, and in particular those of Megaron 2. Aspects of their iconographic and archaeological contexts are taken in to consideration, as well as literary sources and especially the story of the Gordian knot. The focus of the study is a series of incised labyrinths, which have hitherto not been recognized as such, but which are of particular interest for the analysis of this building. The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur in the labyrinth helps to throw light on both the images of Megaron 2 but also on the story of the Gordion knot, and how these are interlinked with each other. It is suggested that Ariadne's ball of thread and the Gordian knot are two different expressions of a similar concept; both represent sovereignty provided by a Goddess. Megaron 2 seems to have been a building that was intimately connected with both the king and the Phrygian Mother Goddess.

Keywords:Gordin, Megaron 2, Gordian knot, Early Phrygian, iconography, labyrith, Theseus, Minotaur

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to analyse Early Phrygian images at Gordion. The incised drawings of Megaron 2 provide us with a rich source of iconographic material, which has recently been published by L. Roller in an exemplarily thorough study.[1] These images are often crude, but the various motifs provide us with valuable insights in Phrygian culture. In order to analyse these images I will use both relevant ancient texts and other iconographic material. There are no contemporary literary sources, and I will therefore use the much later known story of the Gordion knot for two reasons. Firstly, this is one of the most explicit stories about Gordion, and secondly it deals with the foundation of the city and therefore roughly deals with the same period as when the images were incised.

The myth of the Gordian knot is told in connection with the visit of Alexander the Great to Gordion. According to an oracle the person who could loosen the knot tied to the yoke pole of the wagon kept in a temple at Gordion was destined to gain sovereignty over Asia. Alexander solved the problem in different ways according to the two main versions, either by finding the peg that held the knot together, or by cutting the knot with his sword.[2] I will not discuss Alexander's visit at Gordion or how he solved the problem of the knot, but I will rather examine the structure and background of the story and analyse whether any elements of the story may be reflected in the iconographic evidence from Gordion. One intriguing problem that will be discussed is why the knot was thought to provide sovereignty. The outlines of the story will first be taken into account, before examining the inscribed drawings of Megaron 2.

[1] Roller 2009. For other studies, see Young 1969; Roller 1999a; 2012; Simpson 2010, 99–100.
[2] The story of the Gordian knot has been discussed by a long line of scholars. The main publications are by von Gutschmid 1892; Körte & Körte 1904, 12–16; Fredricksmeyer 1961; Schmidt 1963, 29–40; Frei 1972; Hellström 1982; Roller 1984; Burke 2001; Vassileva 2003; 2005, 144; Munn 2006, 83–86; 2008.

The story of the Gordian knot

The myth or legend of the Gordian knot is only known in connection with the conquest of Asia Minor in 333 BC by Alexander the Great. Two authors, Arrian and Justin, relate the entire story.[3] Additionally, a few other authors make reference to the myth.[4] The two main versions differ on several points, but it is generally believed that the version given by Justin reflects the Anatolian core of the legend to a greater extent.[5] The myth may be divided into two parts, the background story that explained how and why Midas/Gordios came to Gordion and the second part that dealt with Alexander's own visit to Gordion. Earlier scholars have examined and compared the two main versions and determined their differences,[6] and I will therefore limit myself to comment on certain elements that are relevant for this study.

The story tells that one day when Gordios, a poor farmer, was ploughing with oxen he was interrupted either by an eagle or by flying birds. This event led him to consult a diviner, who was a young woman/virgin. He married this woman who later gave birth to Midas. Internal strife among the Phrygians led them to consult an oracle, which advised them to choose the next man who entered Gordion seated on a wagon as their new king. This man turned out to be Midas or Gordios according to the different versions. The wagon that had brought the new king to Gordion was dedicated by Gordios/Midas either to Zeus Basileus or *maiestas regia* and placed either in the temple of Jupiter or on the citadel. An oracle had predicted that the person who could untie the knot that fastened the yoke to the wagon would gain sovereignty over Asia. Both versions of this story made a point of emphasizing that Gordios was a poor man with a simple background. Also Curtius pointed out that the wagon was just an ordinary one intended for everyday use. It thus appears, as it was important to point out that the man who was to become king was a poor man with a simple background. He was apparently chosen to become the future king by the deity who had sent the bird(s) as a sign. Arrian stated that the bird was an eagle,[7] while Justin referred to flying birds of every kind. The eagle may, as noted by modern scholars, be an adjustment by later ancient authors as it was the com-

panion of Zeus.[8] The interpretation of flying birds was an old oracular method in Anatolia practised by Hittite augurs, thus the version of the bird oracle given by Justin may originate from an earlier tradition of the story than that given by Arrian. A predatory bird was also intimately connected with the Phrygian Mother Goddess, as she was usually depicted holding one in her hand.[9]

The prophetess that Gordios met has been identified by earlier scholars with the Phrygian Mother Goddess,[10] an identification that I agree with. In Justin's version she is seen at the gate, which corresponds well with both the iconography of the Phrygian Mother Goddess, and the actual location of Phrygian shrines.[11] Arrian, however, wrote that Gordios met her at the spring while she was fetching water in Telmessus. Telmessus is not located close to Gordion or even in Phrygia,[12] and it has very plausibly been suggested that this version by Arrian was inspired by the Telmessian seer Aristandros who accompanied Alexander and his army.[13]

Gordios was directly or indirectly predicted to be the new king by the woman in the version by Justin, while Midas was predicted to be king in the version by Arrian. The names of

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[3] Arr. *Anab*. 2.3; Just. *Epit*. 11.7.4–15. The sources used by these two authors have been discussed by several scholars, but there is no consensus other than that Justin followed the so-called vulgate tradition and that Arrian used sources close to Alexander. For references to these discussions see Frei 1972, 111–112 with n. 9; Roller 1984, 261–262 with nn. 26–35.

[4] Curt. 3.1.14-8; Plut. *Alex*. 18.1–2; Ael. *NA* 13.1; Marsyas of Philippi, *FGrH* 135–136 F 4 = schol. Eur. *Hipp*. 671; Tzetz. *Chil*. 6.72.690.

[5] Körte & Körte 1904, 13; Frei 1972, 121; Roller 1984, 269.

[6] See especially Fredricksmeyer 1961; Frei 1972; Roller 1984, 260.

[7] Aelian (*NA* 13.1) also noted that it was an eagle.

[8] von Gutschmid 1892, 459–460. Roller (1984, 268) suggested that perhaps it was Arrian who introduced the eagle into the story.

[9] As also noted by Roller (1984, 266). For Phrygian examples of the Mother Goddess holding a predatory bird, see Prayon 1987, pls. 2 a–b, 5c and 9a. We may, however, note a small statuette of a hawk from Gordion (Roller 1984, 262, n. 33; Brixhe & Lejeune 1984, no. G-136), carrying a dedication to Bagaios, who according to Hesychius should be identified as Zeus Phrygios. Bagaios is a Persian name and it is plausible that this inscription date to the Achaemenian period.

[10] von Gutschmid 1892, 461; Körte & Körte 1904, 14–15; Roller 1984, 266–267; Munn 2006, 83–84; 2008, 122.

[11] For images of the Mother Goddess standing in a gate, see Berndt-Ersöz 2006, cat. nos. 10, 15, 16, 17, 25, 29, 110 and figs. 117–118 and for examples of Phrygian shrines located in city gates see Delik Taş, Kırkinler, Boğazköy and Kerkenes Dağ (Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 148–152; Summers forthcoming). It has to be admitted that the identity of the deity at Kerkenes eludes us, as the cult image is in the shape of an idol. However, the recently partly preserved sculpture group of an anthropomorfic figure and other creatures supports an identification of the deity as the Mother Goddess.

[12] Körte & Körte 1904, 13–14; Frei 1972, 113; Roller 1984, 262. There are two known places name Telmessos, one located *c*. 10 km west of Halicarnassos in Caria, and the other *c*. 35 km north-west of Xanthos in Lycia, both places of oracles, *RE* II Reihe V (1934), 409–415 s.v. Telmessos (Ruge); Roller 1984, 262.

[13] von Gutschmid 1892, 459; Frei 1972, 121; Roller 1984, 262. See Frei 1972, n. 52 for further references. Cf. Munn (2006, 86; 2008, 122 with n. 63) who suggested that the motif with fetching water goes back to the Lydian period because the tradition of the Telmessian seer stems from the role that he played to the Lydian kings, and that this part of the story was created during the period of Lydian rule. He further interpreted the vessel held by Matar in Phrygian reliefs as a water vessel. However, none of the vessels held by Matar can be identified as water containers. The only jug held by Matar is on the Bahçelievler stele, and this small jug can hardly be intended to imitate a water container because of its shape and tiny size (Berndt-Ersöz 2006, fig. 117).

Gordios and Midas are to a large extent interchangeable with each other in the two versions, and I will not dwell on this issue. However, as pointed out by Roller, it may very well be that Gordios was attached to the story in a later phase as an eponymous founder close to the Greek tradition.[14] Gordios married the virgin, who most certainly is to be identified as the Mother Goddess, in both versions, and Midas was born as their son. This detail, suggesting that Midas was the son of the Mother Goddess, is also found in other preserved stories.[15] It has further been suggested that the marriage between Gordios and the Mother Goddess may reflect a ritual of a sacred marriage between the king and the Mother Goddess.[16] Internal struggle, recorded in both versions, led the Phrygians to consult an oracle that told them to choose the next person who entered Gordion on a wagon as their king. Midas/Gordios was made king in accordance with this oracle and the wagon was dedicated and placed prominently in Gordion. The two stories differ on the details of the dedication of the wagon and its location, but the description of the yoke tied to the wagon and the prediction that whoever undid the knot would gain sovereignty is common to both.

The iconography of Megaron 2

Two of the most prominent buildings in Early Phrygian Gordion were Megara 1 and 2 (*Fig. 1*). Both buildings date to the 9th century BC and were located in the élite quarter of the citadel in which the king must have played a highly significant role. Of these two buildings Megaron 2 was perhaps the more extraordinary, since it was provided with an exceptional pebble mosaic floor while its exterior walls were covered with inscribed drawings.[17] It is, however, uncertain whether the drawings were incised on the standing walls, or before the stone blocks had been incorporated into the building.[18] A few drawings were found on blocks close to the ground,

and a few were made in an overly odd angle if they had been produced on the standing wall, which led Roller to suggest that they were incised beforehand.[19] On the other hand, all the drawings were found on the exterior faces of the walls and no image was positioned upside down. Regardless of which, the building blocks were plausibly incised rather close in time to each other either on the standing walls or in an area not too far away, as the surface of the building blocks had been smoothed.[20] A couple of incised stone blocks had also been incorporated into the nearby city gate complex and two further stone blocks into the wall of House Y, a small storage building behind Megaron 2.[21]

The drawings differ in quality and depict a range of motifs. Roller compared the repertoire with Syro-Hittite motifs, and argued that these drawings were exercises by Phrygian workmen or artisans trying to learn the skill of cutting orthostats according to the Syro-Hittite court style.[22] I am not denying a certain Syro-Hittite influence, but there are several motifs that cannot be found in the Syro-Hitite area, as will be discussed further below. Orthostat reliefs of the same period have been found in Gordion,[23] which reveal that these skills were already present, so it appears less likely that their purpose was to train Phrygian artisans. Other scholars have emphasized the religious connotations for some of the motifs,[24] an aspect that will also be discussed further below.

Let us now turn to the Phrygian images and in particular the incised drawings and examine if and how they may relate to the story of the Gordian knot. It has already been concluded that the episode in the legend where Gordios met the virgin for the first time at a gate or doorway corresponds very well in general with the iconography of the Phrygian Mother Goddess, who is almost without exception depicted standing in a gate or doorway.[25] There are at least four façades incised among the drawings of Megaron 2 (*Fig. 2*),[26] but none

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[14] Roller 1984, 263.

[15] Hyg. *Fab*. 191 and 274; Plut. *Caes*. 9.3; Pseudo-Hesiod fr. 251 (ed. Rzach 1958).

[16] Vassileva 2005, 145; Frei 1972, 118, with further references in n. 36.

[17] Inscribed drawings: Roller 2009. Mosaic floor: Young 1965, figures on p. 10–11; Salzmann 1982, cat. nos. 47–48, pls. 2:2, 3:1–2, 4 and 5. Megaron 2 was not the only building with a mosaic floor, but the far best preserved one. A mosaic floor was also noted in the anteroom of Megaron 1 (Salzmann 1982, cat. no. 46, pl. 2.1) and traces of a mosaic floor in Megaron 9 (ibid., cat. no. 49, pl. 3.3), located across the courtyard facing Megara 1 and 2. Geometric decorated mosaic floor was also found in Middle Phrygian buildings, see ibid., cat. nos. 50–56, pl. 6. For the Mosaic Building Complex, see now Burke 2012, 211–215.

[18] Roller (2009, 39–40) argues that it is more likely that the drawings were incised before the Megaron and city gate complex were built. Young (1969) thought that the drawings had been made on the standing walls.

[19] Roller 2009, 39–40 and cat. nos. 41, 46, 52, 87, 89, 100. There is also one building block with a deeply incised lion that show traces of being in the early stages of a relief work (ibid., cat. no. 98, fig. 116).

[20] Roller 2009, 40. Roller (2009, 42) suggested that the building blocks may have come from an earlier dismantled building in the area, and that they had been used as drawing material before being reused in Megaron 2.

[21] City gate: Roller 2009, cat. nos. 104–105; House Y: ibid., cat. nos. 99–100.

[22] Roller 2009, 19–27, 40–41. Roller (40) emphasized especially the lions and scenes of human figures.

[23] Sams 1989.

[24] Young 1969, 275; Mellink 1981, 101; Simpson 1998, 638–639; 2010, 99–100; Sams 2012, 65. Cf. Roller 2012.

[25] Roller 1984, 266; Munn 2006, 84–85. For examples of Matar standing in a doorway, see Berndt-Ersöz 2006, figs. 26–29, 31, 60, 117–118 and 122.

[26] Roller 2009, cat. nos. 9a (ST 263a), 9b (ST 263b), 46 (ST 317); Roller 2012.
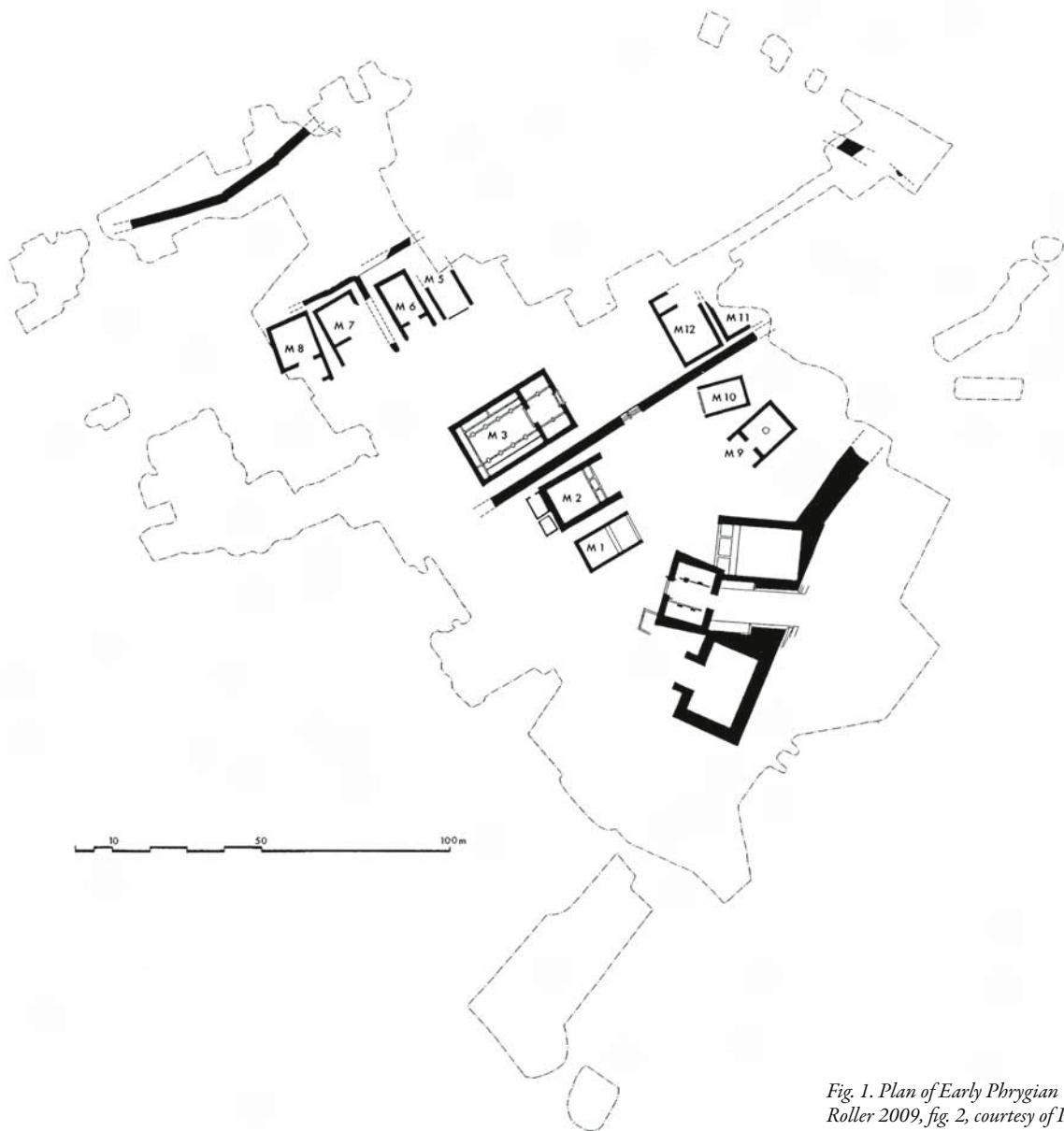
Fig. 1. Plan of Early Phrygian Gordion (after Roller 2009, fig. 2, courtesy of Penn Museum).

of them contain the Mother Goddess standing in the doorway, which may be due to that the Mother Goddess was probably not depicted in anthropomorphic shape during the Early Phrygian period, since the earliest preserved images of the Mother Goddess date to the Middle Phrygian period.[27] It has

been suggested that the incised façades may represent temples, because of their close appearance with the rock-cut façades in the Highlands and the presence of predatory birds next to them.[28] A strong support for a connection with the Mother Goddess is the rosette located above the door of one of the façades (*Fig. 2*), similar to those found on the rock-cut façades

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[27] The earliest images of Matar are generally regarded to be two stelae from Ankara, dated to around 700 BC or later, while none of the rock-cut images of Matar can be dated any earlier than the 6th century BC (Berndt-Ersöz 2006, 117–118; Naumann 1983, cat. nos. 11–21 and 23).

[28] Mellink 1981, 101; 1983, 357–358; Sams 1995, 1156–1157; Simpson 1998, 638–639; 2010, 99–100, cf. Roller 2012.
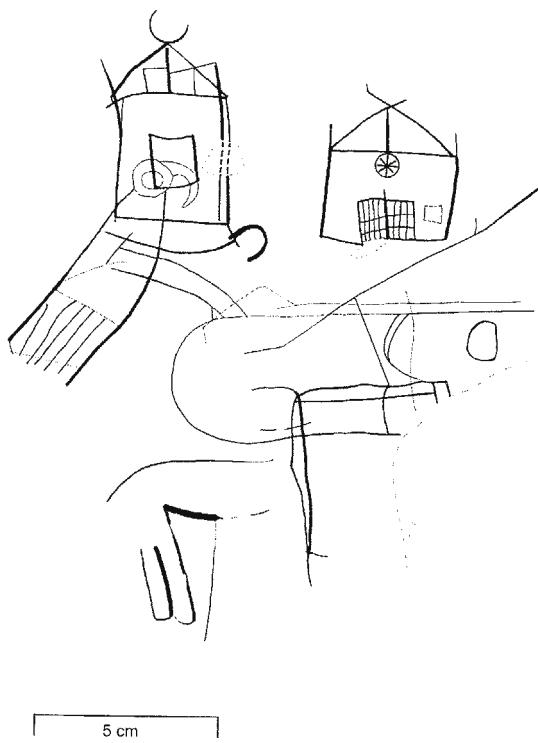
Fig. 2. Incised drawing of building façades with predatory bird from Megaron 2 at Gordion (after Roller 2009, cat. no. 9a, inv. no. ST 263a, courtesy of Penn Museum).

of the Mother Goddess.[29] E. Simpson has convincingly argued that the rosette should be interpreted as a representation of the Mother Goddess.[30] A rosette or star symbolized the Akkadian goddess Ishtar and her Sumerian counterpart Inanna, while the lion was their attribute. Simpson has demonstrated that both the rosette and the lion were adopted by goddesses in other cultures, including the Phrygian Matar.

Both leaves of a double door of the mentioned incised building are closed, contrary to later Middle Phrygian images of façades connected with Matar. At the rock-cut façade at Arslankaya are even the leaves of a double door cut in relief alongside the sides of the niche, as to emphasize that they have just been opened.[31] Hence, these examples of Goddess

appearing in a doorway may have been intended to illustrate an epiphany.[32]

The predatory bird that figures in the myth is also a common figure in Phrygian iconography and an attribute of the Mother Goddess.[33] The most common motif among the drawings is probably a bird, as they are found on almost half of the incised stones.[34] They are of different kinds, but the majority are predatory birds. Detailed examination of the drawings reveals that certain motifs, such as ploughing, wagons drawn by horses or oxen or a plough on its own,[35] in addition to the predatory birds and building façades, frequently reoccur (*Fig. 3*). All of these motifs have parallels in the myth of the Gordian knot, which may of course not be taken as evidence for a direct link between the myth and the drawings. But the story of the Gordion knot may still prove useful for our interpretation of the images, as the story plausibly contains various aspects of early Phrygian culture, as B. Burke has demonstrated in his study. There are for example images of fly-

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[29] Both the Areyastis façade and the Unfinished Monument have a rosette in the centre of the Akroterion, as well as two rosettes each in the pediment (Berndt-Ersöz 2006, figs. 49, 56). Other examples of rosettes connected with the Mother Goddess are given by Simpson 2010, 92.
[30] Simpson 1998, 637–639; 2010, 87–92, 95–96; 2012, 153–155.
[31] Berndt-Ersöz 2006, fig. 27d.

[32] A reference to epiphany in Lydian cult is possibly found in Herodotus's account (1.8–13) of how Gyges gained the Lydian throne. King Candaules persuaded his lifeguard Gyges to see his wife, the Queen, naked, as he thought she was the most beautiful woman on earth. Gyges was taken to the palace and hidden behind the open bedroom door. The Queen, however, caught a glimpse of Gyges while undressing, which recalls an epiphany. The next day she called Gyges and put an ultimatum to him. Either he had to kill Candaules, marry her and receive the throne, or he would be killed himself. Gyges chose to kill Candaules, marry the woman and take possession of the Lydian throne. The stories of Midas/Gordios and Gyges share several features, besides telling how a simple man founded a new royal dynasty. Both married a very beautiful woman who is not named in either story; she may, however, be identified as the Supreme female deity, who provided sovereignty (Munn 2006, 130, 113–114 with n. 72). Gyges saw her through a doorway, while Gordios met her at the gate. Herodotus managed in a very short paragraph to mention the open door or doorway no fewer than three times, which reveals the importance of this detail. This part of the story has a parallel in both the Phrygian and Lydian iconography of the Goddess and the location of Phrygian shrines in city gates. There is only one known location of a Lydian shrine to Kybebe, which was located close to the river Pactolus, but preserved Lydian temple models depict her standing in a doorway, see Hanfmann & Ramage 1978, cat. nos. 6, 7, 9 and 20.
[33] Roller 1999b, 109, 148. For examples of predatory birds in Phrygian iconography see Prayon 1987, cat. nos. 72–76; Draycott & Summers 2008, 56–57.
[34] Roller 2009, 13, images of predatory birds: cat. nos. 3 (ST 257), 5 (ST 259), 8 (ST 262), 9a (ST 263a), 11 (ST 265), 14 (ST 268), 16 (ST 270), 19 (ST 273), 20 (ST 274), 21 (ST 281), 26 (ST 286), 27 (ST 287), 38 (ST 298), 41 (ST 301), 46 (ST 317), 47 (ST 318), 50 (ST 839a, b), 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 59 (ST 313), 62 (ST 383), 65 (ST 386), 66 (ST 387), 69 (ST 407+449), 70 (ST 434), 71 (ST 435), 72 (ST 436), 75 (ST 439), 77 (ST 441), 82 (ST 446), 83 (ST 447), 85 (ST 450), 87 (ST 452), 90 (ST 455), 92 (ST 457), 94 (ST 841), 95 (ST 842), 96 (ST 843); flying birds: cat. nos. 3, 8, 16, 20, 46, 50, 54, 55, 62, 67, 72, 82, 95, 96; seated birds: cat. nos. 5, 9a, 11, 14, 19, 20, 26, 27
[35] Images of ploughing etc. see Roller 2009, cat. nos. 35 (ST 295), 56, 94 (ST 841).

*Fig. 3. Incised figures on one stone block from Megaron 2 at Gordion.
Lower bottom to right: drawing of man behind a cart; Upper row: one
complete and two unfinished labyrinths, partially overlapped by seated bird
(after Roller 2009, cat. no. 94, inv. no. ST 841, courtesy of Penn Museum).*

ing birds around a man (*Fig. 4*),[36] which may recall the scene
when Gordios was interrupted by flying birds while plough-
ing. An event in the Gordian knot story that appears not to
be reflected in the drawings is the "sacred marriage" (i.e. the
marriage between king and the Goddess). We may, however,
note that there are several images of men with erect phalloi,
like the figure surrounded by flying birds (*Fig. 4*), but they are
all drawn without a female partner.[37]

Besides motifs found in the story of the Gordian knot,
there are also other motifs that do not occur in this story.
There are in particular two such motifs, that of a lion and that
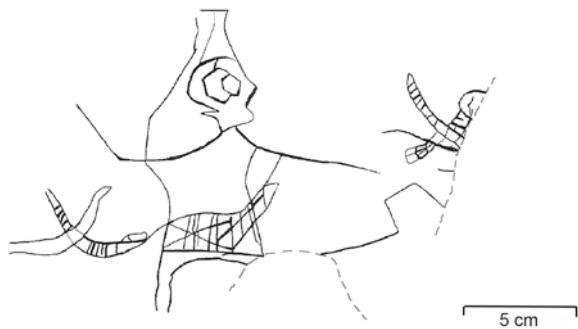
*Fig. 4. Incised drawing of a man surrounded by flying birds from Megaron
2 at Gordion (after Roller 2009, cat. no. 46, inv. no. ST 314, courtesy of
Penn Museum).*

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[36] Roller 2009, cat. nos. 46 (ST 314), 54.
[37] Roller 2009, cat. nos. 31(?), 44, 46, 49(?), 88(?) and 94(?). In some
cases it is difficult to determine whether it is a sword held horizontally
or an erect phallus. Roller (2012, 108; 2009, cat. no. 46) suggested that
the figure (here *Fig. 5*) surrounded with birds may reflect an interest in
falconry, and that he was carrying a dagger in his belt instead of being
blessed with an erect phallus.
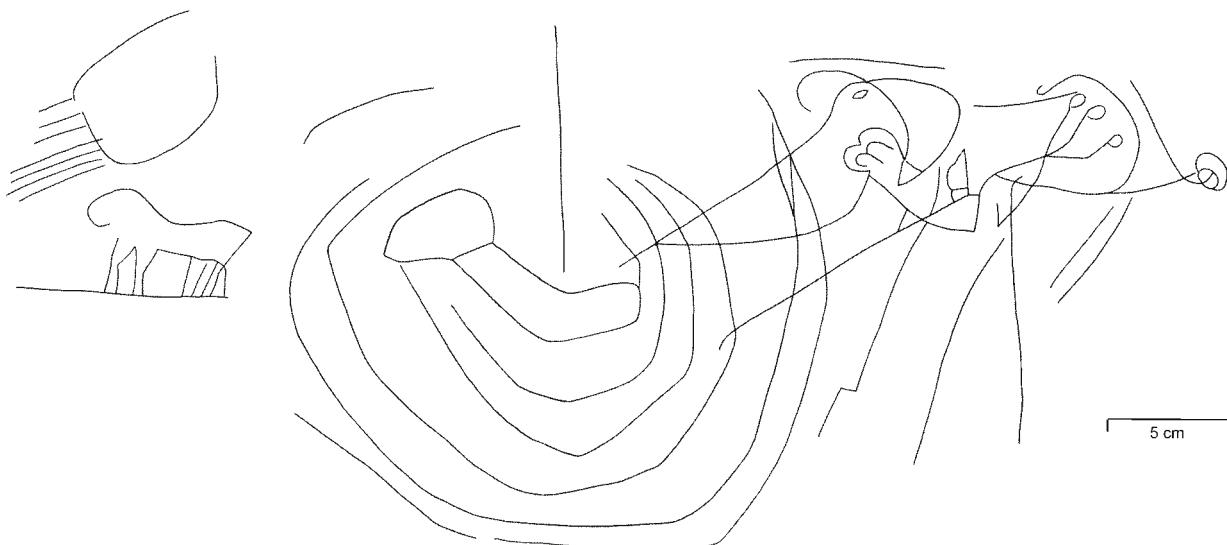
Fig. 5. Incised drawing of labyrinth with horse standing in front from the city gate at Gordion, Early Phrygian period (after Roller 2009, cat. no. 104, Gate stone 1, courtesy of Penn Museum).

of a labyrinth.[38] The lion is otherwise connected with both the Phrygian Mother Goddess and the Lydian royal house.[39] Although we lack evidence that the lion was likewise a royal symbol in Phrygia, lions do figure frequently in Phrygian iconography. Two lion protomes found in connection with Megaron 2 may, for example, have been part of its architectural decoration.[40] The other motif, that of a labyrinth (*Figs. 3, 5*), was not recognized as such by Roller in her publication, but there is no doubt that the intention was to depict labyrinths of the well-known type, labelled as Cretan or Trojan (*Fig. 6*). The labyrinths were in general rather crudely incised and in several cases left unfinished. In addition to those labyrinths
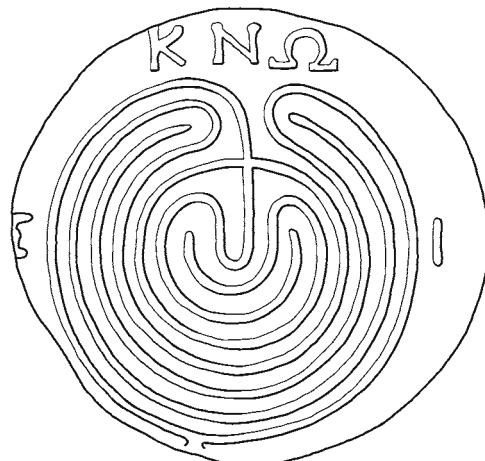

Fig. 6. Coin from Knossos, Crete with labyrinth, 190–100 BC (drawing after photograph in Kern 1982, fig. 57).

made in the external walls of Megaron 2 there is also one from the Early Phrygian city gate complex.[41] The labyrinths are often found together with birds, but also with quadrupeds and humans (see *Table 1*).[42]

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[38] Roller 2009, for lion images see cat. nos. 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9b, 10, 12, 25, 29, 38, 45, 47, 48, 51, 53, 56, 83, 98, 99, 102 and for more or less completed labyrinth images, see cat. nos. 60 (ST 314), 94 (ST 841) and 104. The latter from the city gate. Unfinished or partly preserved labyrinths: cat. nos. 17 (ST 271), 37 (ST 297), 94 (ST 841) and 96 (ST 843).

[39] B.J. Collins 2002, 332–333; 2004, 92–93. The Phrygian Matar is once accompanied with lions at the Arslankaya façade (Berndt-Ersöz 2006, cat. no. 16 and fig. 27) and once by felines on a dinos from Boğazköy (Bossert 2000, cat. no. 272, plate D). A stele from Dorylaion dating to the Lydian period (*c.* 500 BC) depicts a female deity of the Mother Goddess type holding a lion (Naumann 1983, cat. no. 31, pl. 12.1). We may now also note the recently discovered sculpture group from Kerkenes, which plausibly depict the Goddess together with lions (Summers forthcoming). In the later iconography of the Greek Classical period the lion is hardly ever missing as her companion.

[40] Young 1956, 262 and figs. 42–43; Roller 2009, figs. 17–18.

[41] More or less completed labyrinths: Roller 2009, cat. nos. 60 (ST 314), 94 (ST 841) and 104. The latter from the city gate. Unfinished or partly preserved labyrinths: cat. nos. 17 (ST 271), 37 (ST 297), 94 (ST 841) and 96 (ST 843).

[42] See e.g. Roller 2009, cat. nos. 94 and 104.

Table 1. The surrounding figures of the labyrinths incised in Gordion.

Cat. no.*	Star	Bow and arrow	Geometric pattern	Bird(s)	Compass-drawn circle(s)	Human figure(s)	Plough	Idol	Wheel	Quadruped	Unfinished lab.	Partially preserved lab.
17												x
37		x	x									x
60	x											
94a (left)				x	x	x	x?	x?	x	x	x	
94b (centre)				x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
94c (right)				x	x	x	x	x	x	x		
96			x	x		x				goat	x	
104				x						x		

* Cat. nos. refer to Roller 2009. Cat. no. 94 has three labyrinths, which has been separated in the table as a, b, c. There are several images with parallel circular lines that may have been initial trials of making a labyrinth, such as cat. nos. 8, 64, 87, 99, which have not been included in the table.

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE LABYRINTH

The earliest securely attested image of a labyrinth is found on a clay tablet from the Palace of Nestor at Pylos, dated to around 1200 BC (*Fig. 7*).[43] Here the labyrinth is not circular but drawn in the shape of a square on the reverse of a tablet, but it does not seem to be related to the Linear B text on front of the same tablet. Probably the labyrinth was drawn before the text on the other side was incised.[44] Hence, this labyrinth is unaccompanied, without surrounding figures. Besides this example, there are two other partly preserved circular labyrinths, plausibly of a similar or somewhat later date, painted on two sherds that were part of the same vessel. These fragments were found at Tell Rifa'at, ancient Arpad located on the Amuq plain, 35 km north of Aleppo in Syria (*Fig. 8*).[45] The sherds are recorded as being from Level III (Late Bronze Age), but from a disturbed context.[46] No other labyrinths are known from the entire Near East,[47] and a date of around 1200

BC has been questioned by J. Saward, who instead suggested a date of the Roman period.[48] Since Tell Rifa'at lies on the route between Anatolia and the Amuq plain the vessel could also easily have been brought there from outside. Be that as it may, these partially preserved labyrinths from Tell Rifa'at are interesting because they closely resemble those from Gordion. The circular labyrinths at Gordion and Tell Rifa'at are both surrounded with animal and perhaps human figures. One distinct quadruped with rather long ears, or possibly horns, stands in front of the opening of one of the Tell Rifa'at labyrinths. The animal resembles in my opinion a donkey, but could also be a horse, bull, ox, or some other animal.[49] In front of the labyrinth at the Gordian city gate there is a distinct equid in an identical position (*Fig. 5*).[50] The animal is depicted heading away from the labyrinth at both Tell Rifa'at and Gordion, and this is also the case found on the next chronological example, an oinochoe (*c.* 620 BC) from an Etruscan grave in Tragliatella, close to ancient Caere.[51] It is of local production and decorated with incised drawings. The vase has four horizontal decorated bands, of which the main one bears the image of a labyrinth, which is labelled in Etruscan as *Truia*

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[43] Cn1287 rev. Blegen & Lang 1958, 190, pl. 46; Heller 1961, 57–62; Kern 1982, 97 and figs. 103–104.

[44] Blegen & Lang (1958, 190) stated that the labyrinth was incised in slightly softer clay and that the closed character of the incisions of the labyrinth indicated that tablet had been held in the hand while the obverse was inscribed.

[45] Seton Williams 1961, 70.

[46] Seton Williams 1961, 75, 85, pl. 40.5.

[47] Recently one rock-cut labyrinth, probably dating to the Hellenistic period, has been reported in the vicinity of Petra in Jordan (A. Collins 2003).

[48] Saward 2003, 42.

[49] Kern (1982, 97) suggested a bull.

[50] Roller 2009, cat. no. 104.

[51] Museo Capitolino, Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. no. 358, Rome. Heller 1946, 129; Kern 1982, 101–107 and figs. 110–112; Small 1986, 63–96.
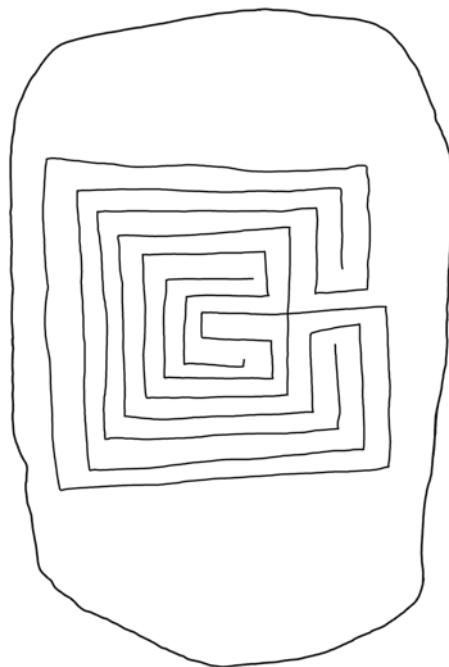
Fig. 7. Drawing of tablet from Pylos with labyrinth, c. 1200 BC.
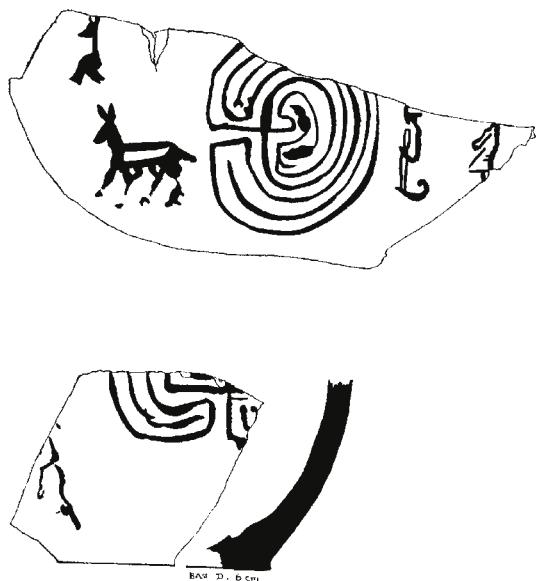
Fig. 8. Pottery sherd from a disturbed context at Tell Rifa'at with a quadruped in front of a labyrinth (after Seton Williams 1961, pl. 40.5, courtesy of British Institute for the Study of Iraq).

Fig. 9. Incised drawing on oinochoe from Tragliatella, Etruria, c. 620 BC (after drawing of G. Mariani, in Annali dell'Instituto di corrispondenza archaeologica, 53, 1881, tav. M).

(*Fig. 9*). A vertical line probably indicates the beginning and end of the decorated band. The first scene consists of two couples making love, followed by the labyrinth, two horsemen, a naked striding man, seven men each with three javelins and a shield who are perhaps dancing. The following scene has three persons, all named in Etruscan,[52] a man resting his arm on a small female figure, probably a child, who is raising her hand towards a large woman standing opposite them. Both the man and the woman hold circular objects, which they seem to offer

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[52] The man is called *Amnuarce*, the woman *Thesathei* and the small female figure/child *Velelia* (Small 1986, 87). Small interpreted these as personal names of the depicted figures who were involved in funeral rituals, while van der Meer (1986, 175–176) interpreted them as theophoric names, referring to Thesan, (a goddess of dawn connected with the Solar goddess) and Mamers (i.e. Mars). The third name is not commented upon, but the other two names offer an association between the depicted scenes and these deities, according to van der Meer.

each other. The frieze ends with a walking woman with her arm raised as if she is pointing to some unidentified phallus-shaped objects in front of her.[53]

As these figures have been both described and discussed extensively by other scholars, I will restrict myself to comments relevant for this study. J.P. Small came to the conclusion that what is displayed are funeral arrangements for the deceased woman, i.e. what is depicted are not mythological figures, but rather events that were connected with the funeral of this particular woman.[54] Her interpretation is interesting, although other alternatives cannot be excluded. Small further interpreted the two horsemen followed by the labyrinth as depicting the games known as the *Troiae lusus* during the Roman period. In this she is not the only scholar who has suggested that these games are illustrated,[55] but to the best of my knowledge no one else has interpreted them as funerary.

Much of the previous scholarly discussion has concerned the Etruscan inscription reading *Truia*, written inside the labyrinth itself. Two theories have been proposed, either the name refers to Troy or it refers to the game *Troiae lusus*.[56] It has been suggested that *truia* derived from the Latin words *amptruo* and *redamptruo*, which were used to define dancing movements. I will not discuss this problem in detail, but I found it problematic that *Latin* words (prior to the 7th century BC) defining dancing movements would have given rise to an Etruscan word defining an equestrian game, an opinion also expressed by earlier scholars.[57] In favour of Truia as somehow connected with the geographical location known as Troia in Greek are the ancient sources,[58] and the fact that labyrinths in Northern Europe still go by the name *Trojaborg* (Troya Burg) or Troy town.[59] Attempts have been made to connect Truia with the Greek and Latin form Troia, but so far as I know, no one has considered a connection with the Anatolian name of Troy. Troy has been identified with the lands of *T(a)ruisa* that is mentioned once together with the lands of Wilusa in the Hittite annals of Tuhdalyias II, dated to around 1400 BC.[60] Güterbock and other scholars have postulated the forms Truisa > Truyia > Troïë,[61] which in my opinion, although linguistics is not my field, would explain the form

Truia. We may further note that Trojan prisoners depicted in the 4th century BC François tomb in Vulci are labelled as *truials*, i.e. Trojans.[62]

R. Beekes has argued in favour of an origin of the Etruscans in north-western Anatolia, an area that accordingly was the old homeland of the Lydians at the time of the postulated emigration of around 1200 BC.[63] He further suggested that Truisas/Truyia was the town of the Tyrsenoi, and that Aeneas himself would have been a Tyrsenian/Etruscan.[64] If a north-western Anatolian origin of the Etruscans is accepted, then the name *Truia*, as given on the vase, may after all be associated with the geographical location in Asia Minor. However, in light of the discussion above, this does not exclude the possibility that the word *Truia* was also used to define the horse games, which may have had a Trojan origin, or at least was considered to have. This would explain why the games were called *Troiae lusus*. These games were performed in connection with two events; funerals and the foundation of a city, i.e. the establishment of the walls of a city.[65] Virgil (*Aen.* 5.545–603) explicitly said that Ascanius *revived* these games when he had built the walls of Alba Longa, implying that the games originated from Troy. In the same passage Virgil said that the leaders of the troops of horses went under the names of Priam, Atys, and Iulus. The second name Atys is of particular interest here as Atys is also claimed to be the ancestor of the Lydians by Herodotus (1.7, 94; 7.74) dating back to the time of the Lydian movement to the south and the migration of the Etruscans. There is a close resemblance between the movements of the horsemen and the circular turning lines of the labyrinth. Additionally, Virgil (*Aen.* 5.575–603) and Plinius (*NH* 36.19.85) explicitly compared them to the Cretan labyrinth. Most probably the pattern of the labyrinth indicated the trails that the riders followed. Plinius also stated that the floors of the Campus Martius, where the games took place, were tessellated. Hence, the labyrinth may be interpreted as the pattern laid out on the ground.[66]

LITERARY SOURCES ABOUT THE LABYRINTH

Before discussing the well-known myth of Theseus and the Minotaur in the labyrinth, I will begin by considering other written material. The origin of the word labyrinth has been

[53] Perhaps to be identified as grave markers.
[54] Small 1986. Cf. van der Meer 1986, 175–177.
[55] Small 1986, 68–69, with further references to other scholars in n. 16.
[56] Weeber 1974, 171–174; Small 1986, 76–78, both with earlier references; de Simone 1968, 119–120; Kern 1982, 99–111; *Neue Pauly* 12 (2002), 865–866 s.v. Troiae lusus (A.V. Siebert).
[57] See e.g. Weeber 1974, 172–175.
[58] Verg. *Aen.* 5.545–603; Sen. *Troades* 778; Serv. *Commentary on the Aeneid of Vergil* 5.556.
[59] Kern 1982, 391–415; Kraft 1985, 13–14.
[60] *KUB* XXIII (1929) no. 11 and duplicate 12 (A. Götze). Güterbock 1986, 35, 39 with earlier references in nn. 8, 19; Easton *et al.* 2002, 94.
[61] Güterbock 1986, 35; Beekes 2002, 206–207.

[62] Small 1986, 76, with n. 50.
[63] Beekes 2002, see esp. 217–239. Beekes (2002, 214) suggested that the whole area north of Lydia once spoke Lydian.
[64] Beekes 2002, 232–236.
[65] Kern 1982, 107.
[66] We may note that the tradition of the labyrinth as a floor pattern continued in later periods, as it was usually laid out on floors in medieval churches and the same tradition may also be found in Northern Europe, with huge labyrinths laid out on the ground.

much discussed and scholars today consider the root of the word to be a *Wanderwort* pertaining to the sphere of divine and royal power.[67] The word appeared as *da-pu₂-ri-to-jo* in a Linear B text from Knossos,[68] and as *labarna/tabarna* in Hittite texts, where it was applied as a royal title by all the Hittite kings. It was probably borrowed into Hittite and other languages from the Luwian verb *tapar*,[69] which meant to rule.[70] A possible Lydian connection with the word *tapar* is known to us through Plutarch (*Quaest. Graec.* 45 2.302a), who wrote that the double axe was called *labrys* in Lydia, in addition to that it was also one of the royal insignia and especially connected with Gyges.[71] The Linear B text from Knossos recorded that a jar of honey was offered to the Lady (Potnia) of the Labyrinth.[72] It is uncertain what exactly is meant by the Labyrinth. It belonged to the sphere of the Goddess, but it also came within the sphere of the ruler, i.e. it belonged both to the king and the Goddess. It may be interpreted as a concept connected with the sphere of ruling that the supreme female deity was in charge of, but it may also have referred to a physical location. We may think of a cult place, perhaps a temple, or the Royal Palace where power was exercised,[73] and at least in later accounts the labyrinth was regarded as a building of the king.

   Herodotus (2.148) is the earliest ancient author who refers to a labyrinth. In his text it denotes a huge royal building complex in Egypt that was both a memorial and royal tomb,[74] while later sources include other functions, such as an administrative centre for justice, a palace or a temple to the Sun god.[75] Other monumental buildings, such as temples and tombs, were also referred to as labyrinths.[76] However, alongside the use of the word labyrinth to denote magnificent buildings, it also had the meaning of mental concepts of torturous character,[77] or could be used to describe physical objects possessing a winding appearance,[78] like sea-shells.[79] Not all the buildings described as labyrinths, like the Hera temple at Samos, bore any resemblance to winding passages, and it is evident that the word was used from the Classical period onward to denote both objects and concepts of a winding character as well as magnificent royal or divine buildings. As a hypothesis we may suggest that at some earlier undefined period both these concepts were connected in some way. A labyrinth as described in the literary sources could refer both to a building and a pattern that was made up of turns and twists. Since the labyrinth came to be used for both these concepts, at least from the Classical period onwards; the building and the pattern probably had once been intimately connected with each other. The labyrinth was as indicated by the Linear B text related with the Goddess, and probably referred to a temple or a building closely related with both the king and the Goddess. The labyrinth as a specific pattern (so-called Cretan labyrinth) also existed during this time, as witnessed by the incised image from Pylos, but we do not know by what name it was referred. We may further note that the dancing floor of Ariadne was not

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[67] Yakubovich 2002, 93–116; Valério 2007, 3–14. See also Tischler 1988, esp. 348, 353–354.

[68] Gg. 702. See Palmer 1963, 238–239, no. 120.

[69] Yakubovich 2008a, 130. The word also appeared in Akkadian, Palaic, and Hattic texts from Hattusa (Valério 2007, 4).

[70] Tischler 1988, 352; Yakubovich 2002; Valério 2007.

[71] Frisk 1973², 67 with further references. Cf. Yakubovich (2002, 106–108) who argues against the traditional view that labrys and labyrinthos were associated and further questioned whether such a Lydian word had ever existed. It is, however, hard to believe that Plutarch invented the word, and as he further put it into a context most certainly such a Lydian word once existed, even though it is not attested anywhere else, which is hardly surprising as the extant Lydian corpus is very small. Whether labrys may be associated with the word tapar is a linguistic question and beyond my field, but it would not be strange for an object of royal signum to have been derived from the verb meaning to rule. We may further note that a double axe was also a symbol of royal authority in Etruria, which has been suggested to be related with an Anatolian origin of the Etruscans (Versnel 1970, 299 with further references in nn. 5–6).

[72] KN Gg 702, see Palmer 1963, 238–239, no. 120. The form *da-da-re-jo* is attested in Linear A (KN Fp I, Palmer 1963, 236, no. 116) and is probably related with the later attested Daedalos. However, it appears rather to be a location, a Daidaleion, than referring to a person or deity (Morris 1992, 75).

[73] Yakubovich 2002, 105–106; Valério 2007, 7; Tischler 1988, 353 n. 18.

[74] Both a pyramid and a structure identified as the Labyrinth have been excavated at Hawara, where the tomb belonged to Amenemhet III (12th dynasty, 19th century BC). For a discussion of the Egyptian labyrinth,

see Matthews 1922, 12–16; Michalowski 1968, 219–222; Lloyd 1970, 81–100; Arnold 1979, 1–9; Kern 1982, 69–78; Reed Doob 1990, 21–25 with n. 6; .

[75] Manetho (*FGrH* 609, F 2–3b, 23-5) and Diod. Sic. (1.61, 66.3–6) also described the Egyptian labyrinth as a memorial and tomb. Strabo (17.1.3, 37) added that it also functioned as palace and administrative centre of justice. Pliny (*HN* 36.19) declared that in general it was thought to be a temple to the Sun god. Modern scholars (Michalowski 1968; Lloyd 1970; Arnold 1979) have suggested that it was a (mortuary) temple, palace, administrative centre or a combination of these functions.

[76] Sophocles (fr. 1030 preserved by Phrynicus, *Praeparatio sophistica* 50.14) referred to a labyrinth as ἀχανές, probably meaning that it was roofless. The Hera temple at Samos was labelled as a labyrinth (Plin. *HN* 34.83, 36.90). A tomb for the Etruscan king Porsena was likewise called labyrinth by Pliny (*HN* 36.91). The monumental staircases at the Apollo temple of Didyma were referred to as labyrinths in the Hellenistic building inscriptions (see Rehm 1958, s.v. λαβύρινθος, in the index).

[77] Plato used the labyrinth as a metaphor of tortuous arguments in his dialogue *Euthydemos* (291b–c), written *c.* 384 BC, where the labyrinth is described as having twisting turns, where you almost end up where you began. The manner in which Plato used the labyrinth as a metaphor indicates that the audience must have been well acquainted with its pattern.

[78] Preserved in the *Bibliotheca* (3.1.4) of "Apollodorus" is a line that is suggested to be from the play *Daedalus* by Sophocles. The labyrinth is here described as a chamber where the "tangled windings perplexed the outward way".

[79] *Anth. Pal.* 6.224 (Theodoridas). Aristotle (*Hist. an.* 499b) also referred to the labyrinth pattern when he described the appearance of the huckle-bone of a lion.

termed a labyrinth by Homer (*Il.* 18.590–605) and, as noted by earlier scholars, the dance itself may have followed the labyrinthine pattern.[80] It is plausible that the pattern acquired the labyrinth label only later. Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 F 148, *c.* 450 BC), who provides us with the earliest preserved version of the myth of Theseus and the Minotaur, interestingly enough never mentioned the word labyrinth. Instead he wrote that with the help of unrolling the thread Theseus would get out of the μύχός, usually translated as the innermost part of the house or store chamber, while the much later Plutarch (*Thes.* 21) used the word labyrinth to describe the circling passages of the dance performed on Delos by Theseus.

THESEUS AND THE THREAD OF ARIADNE

One of the major events in the life of Theseus is his journey to Crete, where he killed the Minotaur, escaped from the labyrinth with the help of Ariadne, before he finally returned to Athens where he became king. There are many variations of the story of Theseus and Ariadne, and it is not the subject of this article to discuss those. The most detailed literary sources are those of Pherecydes of Athens, Plutarch and Apollodorus, while the earliest preserved reference to the story of Theseus and the Minotaur is a fragment by Sappho.[81] In addition there are several references to Theseus and Ariadne by Homer and to the son of Minos, i.e. the Minotaur, by Hesiod.[82] The earliest known images of Theseus killing the Minotaur date to *c.* 670–650 BC and are from the Peloponnese, but there are also early examples from Etruria.[83] The motif is, however, also found in Phrygia and Lydia from a relatively early age. Preserved architectural terracotta tiles from Gordion and Sardis, probably dating to the 6th century BC,[84] depict a fight between a bull-man and a hero.[85]

Fig. 10. Theseus dragging the Minotaur out from the gate of the Labyrinth. Red-figure cup from Vulci, Etruria. 450–400 BC, British Museum, London, inv. no. E84. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Ariadne helped Theseus by giving him a ball of thread, which he used to find his way out of the labyrinth, i.e. the ball of thread was the means by which he gained control of the labyrinth. The thread was fastened to the lintel of the doorway,[86] and the doorway was also emphasized in the iconography (*Fig. 10*). In Attic red-figured vases dated between 450–400 BC Theseus is shown dragging the supposedly dead Minotaur out of the gate of the labyrinth (*Fig. 10*).[87] In earlier black-figured images Theseus is seen fighting the Minotaur next to the gate of the labyrinth.[88] Illustrated is a geometric decorated

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[80] Gutzwiller 1977, 34–36; Kern 1982, 50–51.

[81] Pherecydes of Athens (*FGrH* 3 F 148); Plut. *Thes.* 15–22; Apollod. *Epit.* 1.7–11; Sappho, fr. 206 (ed. Lobel & Page [1955]). The modern literature about Theseus is vast; see for example *RE Suppl.* 13 (1973), 1046–1238 s.v. Theseus (Herter); Brommer 1982; Neils 1987; Morris 1992, 336–361; *LIMC* 7 (1994), 922–951 s.v. Theseus (J. Neils); Walker 1995; Simon 1996, 9–26; .

[82] Hom. *Od.* 11.321–325; Hom. *Il.* 18.591–592; Hes. fr. 145 (ed. Merkelbach & West [1967]).

[83] *LIMC* VI (1992), 580 s.v. Minotauros, nos. 16, 15, 44, 45 (S. Woodford).

[84] Åkerström 1966, pls. 37, 76–79; Ramage 1978, cat no. 5; Glendinning 1996a, 133–143. It is uncertain exactly when architectural terracottas came into use at Gordion, and there is no consensus about the date of their introduction. The earliest tiles are, however, usually dated to the 6th century (Glendinning 1996b, 99–102; Summers 2006) and based on a limited development regarding their decoration and style Glendinning (1996a, 182–183) suggested that they were used over a rather limited span of time.

[85] The artistic composition of these Anatolian terracotta tiles was probably influenced by the motif of Theseus and Minotaur from other areas,

but whether the hero and the bull-man were actually referred to as Theseus and Minotaur in Lydia and Phrygia is perhaps more doubtful. It is possible that the motif corresponded to a local contemporary Anatolian version of the myth. On this issue see e.g. Hanfmann 1958, 65–68 and Glendinning 1996a, 134 n. 285.

[86] Pherecydes, *FGrH* 3 F 148; Apollod. *Epit.* 1.9.

[87] London, British Museum E 84 (=*LIMC* 7 [1994], 927–928 s.v. Theseus, no. 46 [J. Neils]; Beazley Archive no. 217213, *ARV²*, 1269.4); Madrid, Museo Arqueologico L 196/11265 (=*LIMC* 7 [1994], 928 s.v. Theseus, no. 52 [J. Neils]; Beazley Archive no. 215557, *ARV²* 1174,1), Athens, National Museum 1691 (=Beazley Archive no. 206473, *ARV²*, 566.43).

[88] Attic black-figured lekythos (=Beazley Archive no. 331224, *ABV*, 586.53; Kerényi 1976, fig. 30; Wolters 1913, pl. 1); black-figured lekythos from Vari (Wolters 1907, 122, pl. 2); red-figured krater (500–450 BC) Metropolitan Museum 56.171.46 (=Beazley Archive no. 206015, *ARV²*, 531.38). A fragment of an Attic black-figured skyphos (Athens, Nat. Mus. Acropolis Coll. 1.1314, Beazley Archive no. 32157) depicts Theseus alone standing next to the gate of the labyrinth. One fragment-

Fig. 11. Theseus fighting the Minotaur in front of the labyrinth. Black-figured lekythos from Vari (after Wolters 1907, pl. 2).

architectural feature, resembling a pillar, which may be the building itself or rather the gate of the building (*Fig. 11*). The labyrinth is decorated with various geometric patterns, such as meander borders, spirals, dots, and lozenges, but the labyrinth pattern of the Cretan type is never used to decorate the building itself. This pattern did not appear together with Theseus and the Minotaur until the Roman period, and even then are few examples. The earliest evidence is graffiti of a labyrinth at Pompeii with an accompanying text declaring that here lived the Minotaur.[89] There are plenty Roman examples, mosaics in particular, depicting the fight between Theseus and the Minotaur, within a labyrinth but then the labyrinth is always of another type.[90] Coins from Crete sometimes depict the entire labyrinth (*Fig. 6*).[91] The earliest coins (5th century BC) depict, however, only a meander border surrounding the head of a bull or youth, crescent or sun/star, while the other side may depict the Minotaur.[92] Earlier scholars have made it clear

that sometimes meander borders were also referred to as labyrinths.[93] Hence in some cases the meander pattern appears to have functioned as a reference to the labyrinth(-building).[94] This does not mean of course that all meander borders should automatically be interpreted as labyrinths, but rather that the meander border also could be used as a reference to the labyrinth. We may also note that the labyrinth was compared with the Meander River by Ovid (*Met.* 8.157–175).

Theseus is usually seen with a knife or sword, but at the same time he is physically involved with the Minotaur, in actions recalling wrestling, and in at least one image the Minotaur is possibly depicted with boxing gloves.[95] These images, i.e. the wrestling, boxing and the fight next to the gate, correspond to some extent with preserved literary accounts. Apollodorus (*Epit.* 1.9) wrote that Theseus killed the Minotaur by smiting him with his fists, which sounds like a boxing match. Kleidemos (*fl.* 378–340 BC), preserved by Plutarch (*Thes.* 19.4–7), reported that Theseus took part in a battle at the gate of the labyrinth, where he killed not the Minotaur but another son of Minos, Deucalion, together with his bodyguard. A similar setting and event is also told by Philochorus (*c.* 340–260 BC, preserved by Plut. *Thes.* 16, 19.2–3) who wrote that Theseus conquered Taurus, the general of Minos in a wrestling competition, and received as a prize the 14 Athenian youths,

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ed vase depicts Theseus together with Athena in front of the labyrinth (Athens, National Museum, Acropolis coll. 1.1280, Beazley Archive no. 4329). A red-figured hydria (Athens, National Museum, 1691, Beazley Archive no. 206473, *ARV*², 566.43) depicts the fight between Theseus and the Minotaur next to a single column with a man looking at them. The setting of this fight was also probably thought to have taken place outside the labyrinth, perhaps close to its gate, as indicated by the column.

[89] Kern 1982, 98, cat. no. 107.
[90] Kern 1982, 113–38, cat. nos. 115–124b. I have not been able to find any example depicting the fight within the labyrinth of the Cretan type.
[91] Kern 1982, figs. 50-4, 56-8; Wroth 1886, Knossos nos. 11–13, 24–38, 40–50, pls. 5.2–3, 11–18; 6.1–9 and 13–14.
[92] Kern 1982, figs. 39–47, 49; Wroth 1886, Knossos nos. 1–10; pls. 4.7–13; 5.1, 4 and 9.

[93] Wolters 1907; 1913; Lehmann Williams 1965, 215–222; Kerényi 1976, 90; Kern 1982, 14. Meander borders decorated the ceilings of the staircases of the Apollo temple at Didyma and these staircases are labelled as labyrinths in the building inscriptions.
[94] Lehmann Williams 1965.
[95] Black-figured lekythos from Vari (Wolters 1907, 122, pl. 2).

imprisoned in the labyrinth. Philochorus explained that Minos had instituted funeral games in honour of Androgeos, another deceased son of Minos.[96] Various reasons were given for his death. According to one ancient tradition had he won the first Panathenaia and was thereafter killed by one of the men he had defeated. His death is given as the reason for the revenge of Minos, which led to the tribute of 14 Athenians every ninth year.[97] A common theme among these different versions is that a son of Minos was conquered by an Athenian (Theseus, Theseus's father Aegeus or another man) in either a game or a battle. Theseus killed the ruler and inhabitant of the labyrinth, while the ball of thread given by Ariadne led Theseus out of the labyrinth and indirectly led to him to gain the throne of Athens.

Let us here turn back to the story of the Gordian knot and compare the Ariadne's ball or thread with the Gordian knot. The untying of the Gordion knot also provided sovereignty according to the legend. In both cases it is the unwinding or resolution, which directly or indirectly provided the person with sovereignty. A knot or a ball of thread are basically two different expressions of a similar phenomenon or notion, and let us continue this study examining the background of this concept.

The red knot

The thread of Ariadne is usually referred to in Greek as μίτος.[98] In the Hittite language there is a similar word *mi(t)ta-*, *miti-*, translated as red wool or thread.[99] This word was used in Hittite ritual contexts that involved making knots of red wool.[100] Various ritual texts refer not only to red wool but also to other coloured wool, which were made into loops or braided or knotted together. Iconographical evidence from Bronze Age Greece (Crete and Mycenae) confirm knots with loops in religious contexts, but their exact function is uncertain.[101] Some of these so-called sacred knots are combined with double axes,[102] and we may here note for what it is worth, that they

resemble the Luwian logogram no. 369 (ᴱVITA) used during the Hittite Imperial period.[103] This latter sign is further reminiscent of the Egyptian hieroglyphs *ankh*, symbolizing eternal life and *tyet*, the knot-shaped hieroglyph that was a symbol of Isis. However, whether there was any connection between the Hittite rituals and the supposedly Minoan and Mycenaean knots we do not know.

Later iconographical evidence of knotted wool is further known in connection with western Anatolian deities, especially Artemis Ephesia. She was often depicted with knotted strands of probably uncarded wool, which descended from her wrists to the floor.[104] In some cases was a predatory bird (falcon?) inserted between the wrists and the woollen strand. The lower end of the knotted strand was usually divided into three parts. The earliest evidence of this type of knotted wool is found on coins from Kyzikos dated to the 7th or 6th centuries BC.[105] The strands on these hang from each side of a tuna fish. Whether these knotted strands of the Iron Age have any connection with the Hittite rituals is unknown, but a possible connection cannot be excluded.

Let us now turn to the Gordian knot, which Burke convincingly argues was red in colour, because both Arrian (*Anab.* 2.3) and Plutarch (*Alex.* 18.1) described the knot as made of fibres of cornelian cherry wood, implying that it was red.[106] The literary sources do not mention the colour of Ariadnes' thread, but at least in some preserved vase paintings is the ball of wool painted red, e.g. on the François vase.[107] The Phrygian royal name Midas can most certainly be derived from the Hittite word *mita-*,[108] which is a clear indication that the red thread must have been intimately connected with the Phrygian king. Red is a royal colour and also connected with various kings in the Theseus's myth. We are told that if Theseus succeeded in conquering the Minotaur, he was supposed to hoist a white or red sail when returned to Athens. Most ancient authors gave the colour as white,[109] but Simonides (556–448 BC) who is our earliest source on this matter, wrote that the sail was red, and that Theseus had made this a

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[96] The death of Androgeos, Pasiphae, the Minotaur and the labyrinth were depicted on the doors of the Apollo temple in Cumae according to Virgil (*Aen.* 6.14–20) who described the doors. For modern scholars, see Jackson Knight 1936.

[97] *Neue Pauly* 1 (1996), 688–689 s.v. Androgeos (F. Graf). Ancient sources: Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.7; Diod. Sic. 4.60.4–61.3; Zen. 4.6; Paus. 1.27.10, Hyg. *Fab.* 41.

[98] Pherec. *c.* 450 BC (*FGrH* 3 F 148), for further references see LSJ⁹ (1996), 1138 s.v. mitos.

[99] Güterbock *et al.* 1983, s.v. mit(t)a-, miti-, 301-304; Puhvel 2004, s.v. mit(t)a-, miti-, 165–167; Tischler 1990, s.v. mit(t)a-, miti-, 218–219.

[100] Güterbock *et al.* 1983, s.v. (ˢᴵᴳ)mitai-, 304–305, with references to Hittite rituals. See also Burke 2001, 259–260 for examples of rituals.

[101] Evans 1921, 430–435, figs. 308–311; 1925, 5–7, figs. 3–5, 7; Nilsson 1967³, 271, pl. 2.4.

[102] Evans 1921, 433, fig. 310d, e.

[103] Bittel 1939, 9–13; Nilsson 1950², 210–212; Laroche 1960, 195–196; Yakubovich, 2008b, 11; Payne, 2010, 186.

[104] Fleischer 1973, 102–111; Seiterle 1999, 251–254.

[105] Fleischer 1973, 108.

[106] Burke 2001, 257.

[107] Florence, Museo archeologico 4209 (=*ABV*, 86, no. 1; Beazley Archive no. 300000). Ariadne holds a red ball of thread also on a polychrome hydria from Vulci (British Museum H 228 [1850,0227.50]; *LIMC* 3 [1986], 1070 s.v. Ariatha, no. 1 [F. Jurgeit] =*LIMC* 7 [1994], 952–953 s.v. These, no. 15 [C.V. Weber-Lehmann]).

[108] Burke 2001, esp. 260–261.

[109] Diod. Sic. 4.61.4; Plut. *Thes.* 17, 22; Paus. 1.22.5; Hyg. *Fab.* 41, 43, Serv. *Commentary on the Aeneid of Virgil* 3.74. Catullus (64.207–50) contradicted himself as he wrote that the sails were dyed, but still gave the colour as white.

token of their safety.[110] Theseus forgot to hoist the correct sail, and according to the story his father Aegeus then ended his own life in despair. That the red colour was regarded as protecting the king is further made clear from another episode of the myth that refers to Minos's conquest of Megara.[111] Nisos, the king of Megara, had a red lock of hair that protected him. According to an oracle he would die if the lock was pulled out. Nisos was betrayed by his daughter Scylla, who cut off his red lock, and he died. Hence, in both stories when the red colour "failed" the king lost his life, and we may postulate that the red "thread" (in some form) symbolized the king, which helps to explain why the name Midas was used by Phrygian kings,[112] perhaps even as a title. Let us now examine why the knot was regarded as a symbol of sovereignty.

The tied yoke

In all versions of the legend of the Gordian knot it is emphasized that the knot was tied to a yoke, i.e. it was not only the knot itself, but rather the fact that it was tied to a yoke that was of importance. Pherecydes (*FGrH* 3 F 148, *c.* 450 BC) wrote that Theseus tied the thread (μίτος) to the ζῦγόν of the door, which is usually thought to indicate the lintel. However, the same word was also used for the yoke of a carriage, as for example in the Gordion knot story.[113] The parallel with the Gordion knot is apparent: both threads were tied to a ζῦγόν, in the Phrygian story the ζῦγόν referred to a yoke of a cart, while in the Greek version it referred to a part of the porch, but in both stories we have a knotted yoke.[114] Hence, the knotted yoke was closely related with the deity in both the Phrygian and the Greek version, but why was a knotted yoke connected with the (Mother) Goddess?

Ariadne's crown

Before discussing the knotted yoke further, let us consider another version of the Theseus's myth, where Ariadne provided Theseus with another type of clue, namely a crown of light.[115] This version must likewise be of an early date because the crown is depicted in the earliest preserved images.[116] In other words, it appears as though the ball of thread and the crown of light are interchangeable; perhaps they originally symbolized the same aspect of the goddess.

A crown or ring appeared in several narratives about Theseus. Bacchylides relates that one golden ring was thrown into the sea by Zeus and that Theseus was supposed to easily retrieve this ring if Poseidon was indeed his father.[117] Bacchylides did not mention this ring again, but instead continued the story by apparently following another narrative line in which Theseus received another ring or crown. When dolphins brought Theseus to the home of Poseidon he met Amphitrite and the dancing Nereids. Amphitrite gave him a purple mantle and a crown of red roses that Aphrodite had once given her.[118] With these ring(s) Theseus returned to the ship moving towards Crete. That Theseus received both a purple mantle and a red crown reflects of course his future role as king of Athens. The crown that Theseus received from Ariadne before entering the labyrinth follows another narrative line, making it evident, in my opinion, that the various versions of how Theseus received a ring or crown are just variant traditions originating from a common source. Amphitrite, for example, is also connected with dancing and Naxos, just like Ariadne (Eust. and Schol. Hom. *Od.* 1.52). Hence, we may suggest that a crown or ring was given to the future king as a token of his right to rule. According to the myth, Ariadne's crown was placed in the sky by Dionysos where it was known as the constellation Corona. This helps to explain why the crown was said to give light in the myth (Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.5). We may further note that Dio-

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[110] Simon. fr. 54 (preserved by Plut. *Thes.* 17.5, 22.1). Simonides specified that the red colour came from the flowers of the kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*). However, it is not the flowers, but rather the insects (kermes) that live on the tree that give the red colour.

[111] Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.15.8.

[112] Berndt-Ersöz 2008.

[113] Plut. *Alex.* 18.2; Arr. *Anab.* 2.3.1–7; Ael. *NA* 13.1; Schol. Eur. *Hipp.* 671 (ed. Dindorf 1863).

[114] M. Vassileva (2003, 378) has further made the observation that the words σκολιός and ἑλιγμός were used to describe both the construction of the Gordian knot as well as the twisting turns of the labyrinth. Ancient sources: Callim. *Del.* 311; Plut. *Alex.* 18.1; Hdt 2.148. See also *LSJ*⁹, 533, 1613.

[115] Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.5; Eratosth. *Cat.* 5.

[116] A shield band from Olympia (B 1643) depicts Ariadne holding a crown or ring between Theseus and the Minotaur, dated to *c.* 600 BC (Brommer 1982, 40–41, fig. 5e; Greifenhagen 1970, 23, pl. 5.1; *LIMC* 3 [1986], 1054–1055, s.v. Ariadne, no. 34 [W.A. Daszewski]). An earlier (*c.* 675–650 BC) gold relief from Corinth (Ch GI 332–336) depicts Ariadne holding her left hand above the head of Theseus as though she is holding a crown, though the crown itself is not visible (Brommer 1982, fig. 5a; *LIMC* 7 [1994], 941, s.v. Theseus, no. 247 [S. Woodford]). A floating crown with rays is seen above Theseus and the Minotaur on another shield band from Olympia (B 1654), though Ariadne herself is not present (Brommer 1982, 4, fig. 5d). Pausanias (5.19.1) described the scenes depicted on the Chest of Kypselos with a suggested date of *c.* 570 BC (Schefold 1964, 70) in which Theseus held a lyre while Ariadne held a wreath (*LIMC* 3 [1986], 1056, s.v. Ariadne, no. 47a [W.A. Daszewski]; for a reconstruction drawing of the chest, see Schefold 1964, 68–69, fig. 26). A similar scene appears to be depicted on the leg of a bronze tripod from Olympia (B 3600; *LIMC* 3 [1986], 1056, s.v. Ariadne, no. 49 [W.A. Daszewski]; Schefold 1964, 70–71, fig. 28). Whether Ariadne on the François vase is also holding a crown, besides the ball of thread, is uncertain (*LIMC* 3 [1986], 1056, s.v. Ariadne, no. 48 [W.A. Daszewski]; Gantz 1993, 267). For references to images of Ariadne holding a crown, see *LIMC* 3 (1986), 1054–1055, s.v. Ariadne, no. 28–34 (W.A. Daszewski).

[117] Bacchyl. *Ode* 17; Paus. 1.17.3.

[118] For a discussion of the early importance of Amphitrite in the myth, see J.E. Harrison 1898, 85–86.

Fig. 12. The Omega symbol.

nysos made a present of the crown to Ariadne after their wedding. This may be compared with Poseidon putting the constellation Dolphin up in the sky (Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.17) after had succeeded in marrying Amphitrite. The crown of Ariadne was a symbol of the Goddess and, as such, also a constellation. Let us now return to the knotted yoke and the question why it was connected with the Mother Goddess.

In the Near East the so-called Omega figure was a symbol of the Mother Goddess Ninhursağa (*Fig. 12*).[119] What the Omega symbol was supposed to imitate and why it was connected with Ninhursağa has been widely discussed and J. Duchesne-Guillemin has convincingly argued that it originally imitated the constellation referred to as the tied or knotted yoke by the Babylonians, corresponding to the Greek constellation Draco or Dragon.[120] The Omega figure imitated the constellation of the tied yoke, which was the symbol of the Mother Goddess in the Near East. In a previous paper have I demonstrated that the Omega figure was also present in the iconography of the Phrygian Mother Goddess.[121] The symbol was represented in various manners, usually shaped as an akroterion or as hair locks on aniconic idols.[122] The former type can be found from the Early Phrygian period onwards (9th century BC). An akroterion of this specific type was indeed found above the remains of Megaron 2 and has been suggest-

ed to originally have belonged to the building.[123] The earlier mentioned drawings of building façades with akroteria may indeed be depictions of Megaron 2 itself, as also suggested by earlier scholars.[124] Besides akroteria and hair locks in the shape of the Omega figure, the symbol is also present in the rosettes of the central medallions of the two wooden screens or serving stands from Tumulus MM at Gordion.[125] The iconography of these screens has thoroughly been discussed by Simpson, but it should be noted that the rosettes are of another type than those usually depicted in connection with the Mother Goddess. Each rosette consists of four Omega figures encircling the centre.[126] The huge amount of Omega figures, variously shaped as akroteria, hair locks or rosettes, in the iconography of the Phrygian Mother Goddess, proves that the Omega symbol was directly or indirectly adopted for the Phrygian Mother Goddess from the iconography of the Near Eastern goddess. However, we do not know whether the Omega figure was adopted as a meaningless or meaningful symbol. In support of the latter, we may consider that the Gordian knot tied to a yoke was thought to provide sovereignty, which is a good indication of that the Omega figure was not a meaningless symbol in Phrygian iconography, but rather that the knotted yoke symbolized the Phrygian goddess.

Megaron 2 in context

The motif of "Theseus fighting the Minotaur" is depicted on architectural terracottas found at both Gordion and Sardis. From Gordion only 164 fragments are known, found almost exclusively in secondary contexts in the élite quarters of the city mound.[127] One tile was found in the rubble socle of the so-called Painted House,[128] which was an early Achaemenian building built between Megara C and G. After the disastrous fire of *c.* 800 BC, which marks the end of the Early Phrygian period, the citadel was rebuilt following a similar architectural layout, where Megara C and G replaced the earlier Megara 1 and 2. It is possible that this particular tile had once been part of a later rebuilding of Megaron G, as the tile itself has to be

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[119] Duchesne-Guillemin 1986, 246–247; Seidl 1989, 202; Black & Green 1992, 146 .

[120] Duchesne-Guillemin 1986, 234–250. In Akkadian referred to as *niru raksu*. There was a constellation *niru* (=yoke) that has variously been interpreted as Draco (Duchesne-Guillemin 1986, 248 with references; Florisoone 1951, 156) or as roughly corresponding to Boötes, the Ploughman (*CAD*, 264 s.v. nīru A 6). According to Sayce (1898, 290–291 with n. 1) the pole-star was referred to as the yoke, but during this time was the pole-star α draconis, so either was the yoke referring only to this star or the entire constellation. Hunger & Pingree (1989, 137) noted that the circumpolar star "The hitched yoke" might be α draconis.

[121] Berndt-Ersöz 2015.

[122] For akroteria in the shape of the Omega symbol, see e.g. Berndt-Ersöz 2006, figs. 27, 32, 49, 50; 2015, fig. 11; Sams 1994, fig. 20.2; for hair locks in the shape of the Omega symbol, see e.g. Summers & Summers 2006, figure on page 33; Berndt-Ersöz 2015, fig. 5.

[123] Sams 2012, 67, fig. 9 or 1994, fig. 20.2. The akroterion was of the same type of soft limestone as the building blocks of Megaron 2.

[124] Sams 2012, 67.

[125] Simpson 2010, figs. 50, 58, pls. 77, 87.

[126] Simpson 2010, 66. The Omega figures are described as curved double hooks.

[127] Several fragments were found around the inner courtyard; one fragment was associated with Megaron M, 61 fragments came from the Southeast or Building A trenches, 18 fragments from the area of Megaron Q, and 16 fragments from the North Central Trench (NCT), while only one fragment came from another area than the citadel, the Küçük Höyük (Glendinning 1996a, 137–139).

[128] Glendinning 1996a, 137.
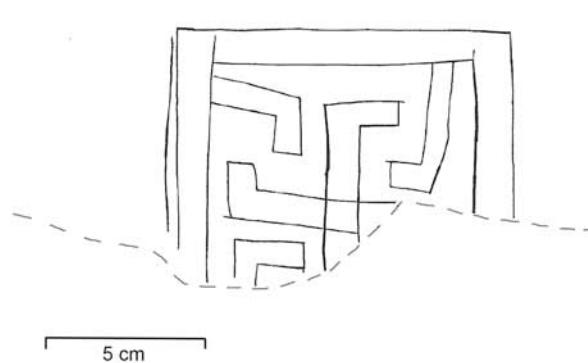
Fig. 13. Incised drawing of meander hooks from Megaron 2 at Gordion (after Roller 2009, cat. no. 23, inv. no. ST 283, courtesy of Penn Museum).

dated later than the original 8th century BC construction of Megaron G. However, that is far from certain, we may only conclude that the motif probably carried some importance as it was depicted on architectural terracottas, which only the most prestigious building were decorated with.

We have learned from both the Greek literary and iconographic sources that in front of a building referred to as a labyrinth various sorts of activities (e.g. dancing, horse riding, wrestling and other games) took place. The incised drawings of Megaron 2 depict similar activities. There are for example incised drawings of nude youths or young men, except for a short kilt, holding a bow and an arrow or a spear, of two men facing each other involved in boxing or fighting with swords. Some images may depict chariot racing or dancing.[129] As discussed above these drawings were either made on the standing walls or before the blocks were incorporated into the building, but then they still probably lay close to the construction site of Megaron 2. If this is correct, then it is possible that the incised images may have been related to this specific building or to its immediate area around. Several of the incised drawings from Megaron 2 may easily be interpreted in terms of outdoor games, which may have taken place in its vicinity, i.e. on the courtyard in front that measured *c.* 28 × 35 m (*Fig. 1*), which is large enough to have hosted games of various kinds. Such games may have been held on various occasions, such as festivals, funerals and enthronements. A royal funeral was an important occurrence for the new king, as this was perhaps the first public event of which he was in charge. The enthronement of the new king and the funeral of the previous one were
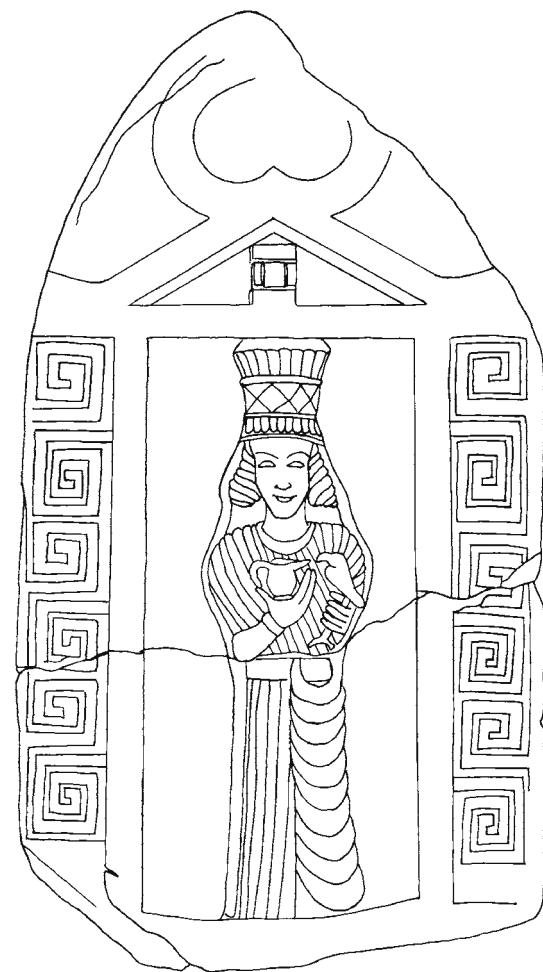
Fig. 14. Stele with Matar inside a door niche decorated with meander pattern, from Bahçelievler, Ankara. Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara (after Berndt-Ersöz 2006, fig. 117).

two public events that were related with each other and probably took place close to each other in time.

Among the drawings of Megaron 2 there are also images of square fields filled with meander hooks (*Fig. 13*).[130] It is possible that these square fields are intended to imitate architectural features, such as a building façade, because meander hooks appear on other imitations of Phrygian architecture. The Mother Goddess on the Bahçelievler stele is, for example, flanked by door jambs decorated with meander hooks (*Fig. 14*), similar to the way in which the doorway of the labyrinth is sometimes depicted in vase paintings (*Fig. 10*). We may here

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[129] Roller 2009, cat. nos. 2, 33, 74, 59, 14, 94 and 101.

[130] Roller 2009, cat. nos. 23 (ST 283), 8 (ST 262) and 49 (ST 344).

Fig. 15. Rock-cut façade, the so-called Midas Monument, with geometric pattern from Midas City. A statue of Matar was most certainly originally located within the niche.

further note that images of Phrygian façades depict them with various geometric patterns (*Fig. 15*). These façades most certainly imitated Phrygian buildings of the megaron type.[131]

None of the images of Megaron 2 is accompanied by an inscription, which is not surprising since the earliest texts using the Phrygian alphabet date later, to the 8th century. The writing system used in some regions of Asia Minor during the 9th century BC was the Luwian hieroglyphic script. It was probably not used by the Phrygian society, but they must at least have been familiar with the script to some extent.[132] The Luwian hieroglyphic logogram (no. 115, LEPUS) for the word *tapar*, to rule, was a hare, probably because the Luwian pronunciation of a hare resembled *tapar*.[133] The Mother Goddess is usually accompanied with a predatory bird, sometimes lions, but there are actually also a couple of images from Asia Minor where she has a hare in her lap. A statue of her from Takmaköy in Phrygia,[134] and an Archaic relief from Ereğli, an-

cient Perinth, at the Black Sea coast depict her with a hare.[135] On basis of that the Mother Goddess provided the king with his right to rule,[136] it is plausible that the hare associated with the Mother Goddess is a reminiscent of the Luwian logogram of *tapar*. We may here note that the predatory bird usually associated with Matar, was also a Luwian logogram (no. 128, AVIS) used as a determinative of the Syro-Hittite goddess Kubaba.[137] There is one drawing of a man who holds a double axe in his raised right hand and a rope ending with a hare in his left hand (*Fig. 16*).[138] How should we interpret this man? Is the hare there as a reference of a successful hunt or as a reference to the Luwian logogram of *tapar*,[139] i.e. to indicate that this man is a ruler or king? I think the latter, and there is hardly a coincidence that this man also holds a double axe, which was, at least in Lydia, a royal symbol.[140] The (double) axe was also an important attribute of the Anatolian Weather god and part of the Hittite king's ceremonial dress.[141]
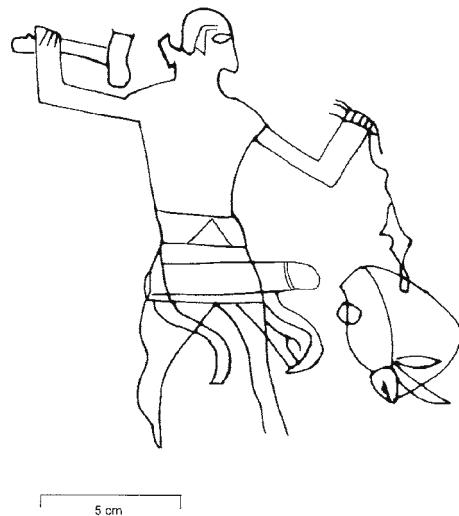
Fig. 16. Incised drawing of man with erect phallus holding a hare and an axe, from Megaron 2 at Gordion (after Roller 2009, cat. no. 44, ST 315, courtesy of Penn Museum).

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[131] See for example the Midas Monument, Arslankaya, Büyük Kapı Kaya, Mal Taş (Berndt-Ersöz 2006, cat. nos. 30, 16, 17 and 24).

[132] Roller (2009, 28, 34–35) suggested that some of the symbols depicted on Megaron 2 were influenced by the Luwian hieroglyphs.

[133] Yakubovich 2002, 97–98; Payne 2010, 170, no. 115.

[134] Naumann 1983, cat. no. 47, pl. 15.2–3.

[135] Naumann 1983, cat. no. 66, pl. 18.3; Vermaseren 1989, cat. no. 369.

[136] On this topic, see esp. Munn 2006.

[137] Hawkins 1980–1983, 258; Roller 2009, 34.

[138] Roller 2009, cat. no. 44 (ST 315).

[139] For what it is worth we may note that an Etruscan black-figured amphora (540–520 BC) of Minos (?), depicts him as an old man holding a staff in one hand and a hare in the other (*LIMC* VI [1992] 572 s.v. Minos, no. 35 [J. Bažant]).

[140] Plut. *Quaest. Graec.* 45 2.302a. The double axe was a royal symbol in other cultures as well, such as the Etruscan one (Versnel 1970, 299 with further references in nn. 5–6).

[141] B.J. Collins 2007, 97.

THE MOSAIC FLOOR

Megaron 2 had a floor of mosaics with a rosette in the centre that was surrounded by various geometric patterns.[142] Almost opposite the rosette, on the other side of the central circular hearth, a quadruped is depicted, possibly a bull or a horse. Identical rosettes, drawn with the help of a compass, were also found among the inscribed drawings of this building.[143] There are several compass-drawn circles, plausibly to be interpreted as unfinished rosettes,[144] of which some were made in connection with labyrinths. The fact that the rosette is found both in the centre of the mosaic and on the walls of the same building is a good indication of that the drawings were also connected with the building itself.

As mentioned above the rosette has been suggested to represent the Mother Goddess, but what should we make of the quadruped? This is the only animal or living creature depicted in the entire mosaic. Its position, opposite the rosette, is probably not a coincidence and we may assume that the two are related. The Goddess, in the form of a rosette, is without doubt the more important figure, as she is located at the centre of the room and is considerable larger in size than the beast. However, if the hearth is interpreted as the centrepiece of the room, then both representations are encircling the centre. As the quadruped is accompanying the goddess, it should be more or less equivalent to her; possibly a deity or a (divine) king. If the quadruped is identified as a bull, then it may be the Weather god, or his earthly representative, i.e. the king. The Goddess and the "bull" are surrounded with various geometric designs, which may recall both the Linear B text of the Goddess within the Labyrinth and the later Greek myths of the Minotaur in the Labyrinth. If such a hypothesis is accepted, then it follows that the geometric design of the mosaic floor corresponds to the literary texts describing the confusing windings of the labyrinth. A similar interpretation may be suggested for the rock-cut façades, where the Mother Goddess, in anthropomorphic shape instead of a rosette, is likewise in the centre surrounded by a geometric pattern made up of intricate windings (*Fig. 15*). The significance of the geometric design in these contexts is uncertain, but the material evidence indicates that prominent royal buildings and/or temples were decorated with geometric patterns. Several of the so-called

temple models from various parts of Greece had also the exterior walls covered with geometric patterns.[145]

To conclude, the drawings inscribed on Megaron 2 plausibly reflect activities that once took place in the élite quarters of the citadel, plausibly within and in front of Megaron 2, and the motifs of these suggest activities in connection with both the king and the Mother Goddess. There are several other examples of graffiti or inscribed drawings associated with Phrygian cult both regarding their content and location.[146] We may suggest that these inscribed images were associated with activities and rituals performed at the specific location.

The graffiti of Megaron 2 probably reflect such activities and as a hypothesis I would like to suggest that activities in connection with the enthronement of the new king took place here. The enthronement of a new king goes, however, hand in hand with the funeral arrangements of the previous king, and it is plausible that both these activities took place within and in front of the building that represented the royal power but also the Mother Goddess. We cannot of course not exclude that other types of activities and rituals also took place here.

THE LABYRINTH PATTERN AND WHAT IT MAY HAVE SYMBOLIZED

Many ideas have been presented what the specific labyrinth pattern may have symbolized. It was originally not my intention to deal with this aspect at all, but throughout my work it has become evident that I cannot completely ignore this topic.

Before considering the labyrinth, let us return to the myth of the Minotaur and Theseus. The Minotaur, whose name was Asterios (= the Starry), was the offspring of an intimate relationship between Pasiphae, the wife of Minos, and a bull sent by Poseidon. Pasiphae hid inside a hollow cow, built by Daedalus, during the intercourse with the bull. This episode together with the report that every nine year seven youths and seven maidens were sent from Athens to feed the Minotaur is important for our interpretation. This time period of nine years appeared also in Homer, who wrote that Minos had a conversation with Zeus every ninth year (*Od.* 19.179). We may here compare the Hittite Purulli festival, which culminated with the legitimization of the king by the gods or, more

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[142] Salzmann 1982, cat. no. 48, pls. 2.2 and 3.1

[143] Roller 2009, cat. nos. 10 (ST 264), 70 (ST 434), 72 (ST 436), 75 (ST 439), 82 (ST 446), 85 (ST 450)

[144] In at least one case is it evident that the circles were originally intended to be rosettes, since both types are made next to each other (Roller 2009, cat. no. 10, ST 264). For other compass-drawn circles, see Roller 2009, cat. nos. 10 (ST 264) 34 (ST 295), 42, 82 (ST 446), 84 (ST 448), 94 (ST 841). The latter with labyrinths.

[145] Schweitzer 1971, 220, pl. 238; Schattner 1990, cat. nos. 1, 3, 6, 8, 23 and 46.

[146] Images of aniconic idols are for example inscribed in the so-called Cappadocian Gate at Kerkenes Dağ, which housed a small shrine where an aniconic idol was found *in situ* above a stepped monument (Berndt-Ersöz forthcoming). Verbal graffiti, mentioning Matar, were further applied in the niche of the so-called Midas Monument at Midas City (*Fig. 15*) (Brixhe & Lejeune 1984, 12–15, cat. nos. M-01 c–e). Graffiti, such as rosettes, have also been found on the tenons of the two wooden serving stands from the tomb chamber of Tumulus MM at Gordion (Roller 2010, 189–195, figs. 63, 65–66, pls. 93–94).

specifically, with the Sun goddess of Arinna who provided the king with his right to rule.[147] This festival took place every year, but there was a greater cycle of nine years.[148] It is possible that the sovereignty of the king was authorized every ninth year by the gods. It may have been a similar concept that lay behind Minos's conversation with Zeus every ninth year. We may further note that in Sparta the kings had to be reinstated every ninth year.[149] The ephors studied the heavens during a clear and moonless night in order to decide whether the gods approved of the kings' continuation in office.[150] Eight years (or every ninth year), i.e. *oktaeteris*, was a time period used in Greece to synchronize the lunar and solar calendars with each other, because it takes about eight solar years (2,923.5 days) for the planets to return to same positions in the sky.[151] In other words, the sun and the moon would come together at the same point in the sky where they had been eight years ago and this astronomical event is reflected in the myth of Pasiphae and the bull.[152] A sacred marriage between the sun and the moon corresponds with the act of love between the bull and Pasiphae, disguised as a cow. The moon may be described as the cow, while the bull represented the sun. Further support of this may be found in images on coins from Knossos depicting a crescent, representing the moon, and a star, representing the sun, in the centre of the labyrinth.

The eight-year cycle was of importance in the cultic calendars of both the Greek and the Hittite world. In Delphi were certain festivals (Charila, Stepterion, Herois) held according to the eight-year cycle, in addition to the Pythian games that were originally held every eighth year.[153] The Olympic games, held every fourth year, also reflect the same eight-year cycle, as demonstrated by M.P Nilsson. The celebrations of the Olympic games alternated between two consecutive months, i.e. the first period of four years had 49 months, while the next period of four years had 50 months. The explanation provided by Nilsson is that the Olympic festival was originally arranged according to the eight-year cycle or the *Oktaeteris* that had 99 months, but when the calendar was introduced, then it was necessary to alternate the month of the Olympic games.

In the Hittite world, in addition to the greater cycle of eight years in the Purulli festival mentioned above, we may note that the *kursa*, which consisted of eight fleeces, was renewed every ninth year.[154] Let us now turn back to the design

of the labyrinth that close to its centre has a crossing point of the two circular lines. As a hypothesis we may suggest that these two cyclical lines are schematic images of the paths of the sun and moon respectively during a period of eight years. The crossing point may then originally have been a schematic image of when the sun and the moon after a period of eight years again were in conjunction. Hence, the labyrinth pattern may designate a time period of eight/nine years.

Concluding remarks

Through a combined analysis of iconographic and literary material it has been suggested that Megaron 2 at Gordion was a building that was intimately connected with both the royal élite and the Mother Goddess. The images of labyrinths on its walls have allowed us to connect Early Phrygian cult with the earlier Bronze Age within Asia Minor but also with Greece. The Gordian knot and the ball of Ariadne in the myth of Theseus are interpreted as two different expressions of a similar concept, and it is plausible that both myths developed from a common source of origin. The possible link between these two stories is unclear, but there are some indications, such as the Luwian origin of the word labyrinth and the role played by Troy, that a common origin may be sought in western Asia Minor, plausibly within the Luwian sphere and from there it spread to various parts of Greece and to the Hittites of central Anatolia. The Phrygian society probably received their knowledge through transmission of the Hittites, although other alternatives cannot be excluded.

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[147] Haas 1994, 190, 696–697.
[148] Haas 1994, 698–699.
[149] Frazer 1911³, 58–59.
[150] Plut. *Ages.* 11.3.
[151] Nilsson 1920, 363–364.
[152] Cook 1903, 411–412; 1914, 521–524; Frazer 1911³, 70–74; Kern 1982, 55.
[153] Nilsson 1920, 364–365.
[154] Haas 1994, 698, 701.

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