

Tombs as Places of Cult and Imagination

9th International Spring School. 9th - 13th March 2008

Death is certainly not only the biological end of one's life, but moreover the very starting signal for a whole sequence of ritual practices connected to the preparatory aspects of the burial, the burial itself and various activities aiming at the remembrance or continuation of the deceased. Nonetheless, archaeological remains of burial practices are often our only path for understanding local communities and their social structures and this demonstrates how deeply connected to materiality death actually is. The so-called history and archaeology of death can offer invaluable information on aspects as diverse as family interrelations, sanitary and alimentary habits, economic and social status, and demography. As regards the intense interconnection between death and religion, burial practices are an undisputable manifestation of a society's respect or disrespect towards its immediate past. Their inherent fixation towards the past is perhaps one of the reasons for the burial practices being so astonishingly neutral to major religious changes (for example the spread of Christianity). Beyond this, tombs can function as an important sign underlining one's and his family's social and even ethnic identity (the tomb of Eurysaces the baker in Rome or the conscious use of funeral cippi by Phoenicians in Late Geometric and Archaic Greece), but they can also create an imaginary, artificial picture of the deceased (Cestius' pyramid in Rome).

The 9th International Spring School will focus on the Ancient Mediterranean. Based on the literary, archaeological, and epigraphic evidence, our goal is the understanding of the religious and social issues involved in burial practices and rituals at the tomb. This will constitute a point of departure in order to investigate the mythical, philosophical, and theological conceptualisation of the life to death transition, of the "ontology" of the dead. Lectures and seminars will offer insights into different periods and contexts, from Archaic Greece down to texts by Lucian and the martyrological discourse of the Second Sophistic or Christian practices of Late Antiquity.

Joannis Mylonopoulos and Jörg Rüpke

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Vorträge

Sepulcrorum Ambitione. Social and religious messages evoked through Roman Tomb Architecture in rural Cilicia Campestris

Based on her experience of participation in field surveys *Martina Andreoli* demonstrates in a case-study of a rural area situated in south-eastern Turkey the various aspects of funerary contexts outside the common mentioned areas.

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Drusus' Funerary Honors

Annemarie Catania's paper will follow a combination of visual, historical and mythological threads of the triumphal tradition in order to examine the depiction of Dionysos in triumph in a funerary context.

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Greek Myths in Funerary Contexts of the Bosporan Kingdom

Mareike Heinritz develops a new approach towards the interpretation of the use of Greek myths in funeral contexts of the Bosporan kingdom, on the example of the myth of the Niobids. Mareike Heinritz argues in her paper that the myth of the Niobids in the Bosporan context is used in a much more abbreviated form and within the rules of a local funerary tradition.

[Weiterlesen...](#)

The descent into hell and the preaching to those who sleep

Evangelium Petri concerns a preaching of Jesus, which he gave during the time between His death and His resurrection to those who were sleeping. To understand the sources and to figure out the cultural background and meaning of the pseudo-Peter's writing *Pia De Simone* compares this narration with two references to the descent of Jesus into hell which are to be found in the 1st letter of Peter.

[Weiterlesen...](#)

Mythology and rituals around the stone

Lucia Marrucci's paper examines the polysemic role of the stone in ancient Greece, focussing especially on its relationships with ritual practices and with myths concerning the death. Its aim is to apply to the 'image' of the stone the analysis of Greek myth based on the idea of Polyvalence des Images, shaped by the founder of the Historical Anthropology of the Ancient World, Louis Gernet, in order to investigate some Greek attitudes toward the death.

[Weiterlesen...](#)

Roman Sarcophagi in their Original Context, Rome and Vicinity

Previous research on sarcophagi has focussed primarily on the stylistic and iconographical evaluation of their figured decoration, treating them as autonomous works of art and separating them from their original context, the graves. *Katharina Meinecke* instead aims to reunite coffin and context

by evaluating the original setting of the sarcophagi, their position in the tombs and the funerary cult taking place around them.

[Weiterlesen...](#)

02.03.2009



Architektonische Tradition des östlichen Mittelmeeres in der Bronzezeit: Konvergenzen und Abweichungen

2. Internationales Symposium in München, Gasteig, den 7. und 8. Mai 2008 Im Mai 2008 wurde auf Initiative des „Vereins zur Förderung der Aufarbeitung der Hellenischen Geschichte“ in München ein Symposium zum Thema „Architektonische Traditionen des östlichen Mittelmeeres in der Bronzezeit: Konvergenzen und Abweichungen“ durchgeführt, der schon mehrere wissenschaftliche Treffen zu philologischen und archäologischen Themen veranstaltet hatte. Mitveranstalter war der Verein Ägäis München. An diesem Treffen nahmen Wissenschaftler aus mehreren Ländern teil, die sich auf verschiedene Regionen des östlichen Mittelmeeres, wie die Ägäis, Zypern, Kleinasien, Syrien/Palästina, konzentrierten.

[\[mehr\]](#)



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[\[mehr\]](#)



15.02.2008

Athens and Rome: Introducing New Gods

8th International Spring School (25th-29th March 2007) Polytheistic religions are per se most dynamic religious systems, since in their understanding different divinities, diverse ritual practices, or mutually contradictory beliefs can co-exist without causing serious theological problems; the polytheistic conception of religion even allows, however under certain circumstances, new gods to be introduced and become an integral part of an already existing system. Aim of the 8th International Spring School at the Department for Religious Studies of the University of Erfurt was not so much the plain description of the phenomenon as such, but moreover the understanding of the religious, social, and political mechanisms that "allowed" a new deity to arrive and settle down in an alien context.

Abstract

Tombs are since the origins of appearance relevant and meaningful symbols for living more than for deceased. Every civilization assumed in different places and periods independently the same priorities in relation to the funerary sphere: the memory-transmission of the deceased in observation of rules concerning religion and tradition.

The case study of a rural area situated in Cilicia Campestris (Kozan-Adana) shows in part some of these activities even outside the big urbanized cities. The analyzed tombs imitate sometimes the architecture of houses to underline the function of an eternal place for the dead, some temple-tombs explain through architectural features the elevation to the sacred sphere, gardens are created around the tombs to receive visitors, inscriptions are placed where passers-by will definitely see them to transmit important qualities of the owner, and often the choice of an absolutely dominant position to erect funerary buildings transforms the structure into a territorial marker.

Generally, in the XXth century, scholarly research concerning funerary documentation in Asia Minor has primarily focussed on monumental tombs belonging to well-known necropoleis of ancient cities, on sarcophagi decorated with mythological imagery and often only considering the epigraphical remains excluding an analysis of the funerary structures.

Recently a lot of new studies on roman imperial tombs appeared with the goal to repair the gap in funerary documentation, adopting modern archaeological methods, normally supplying exhausting plans of the structures and the analysis of other archaeological materials found there. In spite of all that new researches, it remains still uncommon to gather anywhere information about free-standing tombs of rural areas situated far from bigger cities.

The case-study of a rural area situated in south-eastern Turkey demonstrates the various aspects of funerary contexts outside the common mentioned areas and is derived from the experience of participation in field surveys over three years. The research [1], that started in 2003 in collaboration with the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Istanbul* under direction of Prof. Adolf Hoffmann and Prof. Mustafa Sayar of *Istanbul Üniversitesi*, was organized to investigate the presence of an over dimensioned, extraordinarily good erected Hellenistic fortress discovered just a few years ago on the top of the mount Karasis, near ancient Sis, modern Kozan, and approximately 30 km north of ancient Anazarbos, founded by the emperor Augustus in 19 B.C.

Trento University, with a research team directed by Prof. Mariette de Vos, had to investigate the surrounding landscape to understand the relationship between the fortress and other conserved monuments in proximity of the mountain.

During these field-surveys the most observed territories were principally the slopes of the Karasis, a 1050 m high mountain and the shores of the artificial lake just at the foot of it. Between 2003 and 2005, during three summer-expeditions, 25 sites were discovered and mapped through total stations, Geo-positioning System, and the documentation of small finds lying on surface. No excavation has been carried out.

The discovered sites refer to one monumentalized Hellenistic water-source, 14 monumental tombs, 6 probably late antique rock-cut tombs, 5 inhumation cemeteries, 9 late roman settlements with oil presses, 11 Byzantine Churches, one Byzantine monumentalized water-source, and 3 Armenian Churches.

The considerable archaeological stratification of the discovered rural sites makes the analysis sometimes very arduous, so that in this heterogeneous landscape sure information about the roman occupation of the territory can be understood only in contexts belonging to roman monumental tombs with their inscriptions, their architectural feature, their funerary furnishings and their specific position.

These tombs are positioned in beautiful, panoramic places, from where vast areas can be dominated. Consequently they can be considered as territorial and social markers imposing their presence. The location was in fact a crucial and integral aspect of tomb's message and meaning.

On the other hand free-standing tombs can be considered as property markers and permit us to relate possible near situated settlements, which might have been in the majority of cases the matter of Karasis tombs erection.

[1] The following short relation can't supply specific information about the results of the Karasis-Project, because of forthcoming final publication. Previous results are published in S. Conti, B. Scardigli, M.C. Torchio (a cura di) *Geografia e viaggi nell'antichità*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi (Certosa di Pontignano, 9-10 ottobre 2005) Ancona 2007, pp. 13-39, 67-81 and in *IstMitt* 57, 2007.

Different dimensions of funerary structures can be charily related to social-status, which often conditions the forms of expression. An interesting aspect concerns also the study of the identity of the tomb-owners by analyzing their inscriptions, but sometimes new difficulties emerge because a large number of these epigraphic attestations list only the names or the relationships of the buried. This means that only in case of well-known families it becomes possible to achieve sure information about the social position of the owner.

This kind of problem emerges also from the rare conserved inscriptions belonging to the Karasis- tombs. One of them, discovered at site 11 [2], shows the relevant meaning of funerary epitaphs as markers of identity and how they played a prominent role in the perpetuation of memory, forming an intrinsic element of the decoration of the tomb. Numerous monumental tombs are inscribed with epitaphs which are prominently located at eye level, on the socle at the façade of the tomb, revealing a desire to arrest the attention of the living.

They can also appear on door lintels, where the message generally establishes ownership of the tomb and lays down the conditions for the right of burial within, which is the case of the mentioned inscription.

In Roman Imperial period particularly close connections between tomb architecture and contemporary religious architecture existed. Free-standing

columns, elaborate decorated entablatures, and pediments are practically synonymous with temple architecture and numerous tombs adopt these elements also in rural areas.

Architectural details of monumental tombs demonstrate the will of the owner to self representation, evidence that reflects the complex hierarchy of roman society.

The study of funerary evidences has the potential to supply important information about aspects of the inherent society. But the relation between the group of the living people and the "dead one" can't be considered a direct approach. Following the theories of Post-Processual Archaeology we have always to remember that what can be captured observing funerary remains is only a metaphoric image of reality. Aspects of the social and cultural belonging were reorganized by the community with a new symbolic order and expressed through the filters of ideology (ideas, beliefs and meanings). In fact there is sometimes a transmission of symbols from the living to the dead to express particular ideas. Anyway the multitude of variables that can be found in cemeteries imposes obligatory to investigate also the characteristics of other near archaeological evidences like settlements, temples and so one.

This has been the main purpose of the investigation around the Karasis Mountain, which has demonstrated how this territory was rationally used since ancient times. The studied archaeological landscape has shown that the exploitation of the soil and generally of the area is quite similar also today [3] and therefore sometimes providing interesting parallels between ancient and modern times in Cilicia *Campestris*.

[2] See M. de Vos, M. Andreoli, R. Attoui, S. Polla, *IstMitt* 57, 2007, p. 452.

[3] M. de Vos, M. Andreoli, R. Attoui, S. Polla in *Geografia e viaggi nell'antichità*, p. 26.