

A Tomb with a View: Topography and Visual Politics in the Funerary Monuments of Hellenistic Kings

A wealth of recent literature analyzing Anatolian monuments as part of a "place-based" archaeological method - spearheaded by Ömür Harmanşah's extensive work on Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age rock reliefs (Harmanşah 2015) - has characterized much of the scholarly discourse concerning the significance of local topographies in the construction of rock monuments in Anatolia. In such a "place-based" approach to ancient monuments, specific topographical features, cultic rituals, and histories associated with particular places comprise a complex system of accumulated meanings that are woven into the construction of ancient monuments (Canepa 2014; Harmanşah 2015). While Harmanşah's work focuses on how these cumulative meanings are visually expressed in Hittite rock carvings, this discourse provides a useful framework for numerous Classical and Hellenistic sites. Specifically, this paper deploys such a "place-based" framework to analyze tombs belonging to Hellenistic kings in Anatolia, including the rock-cut tombs of the Mithridatic dynasty at Amaseia (modern Amasya) and the tumuli of the royal Galatian family at Bloukeion (modern Karalar).

In Pontos, I discuss how the topographical situation of the Mithridatid royal necropolis at Amaseia (Fleischer 2005, 2009) serves a two-fold purpose. First, the tombs' situation in relationship to the urban space of Amaseia sets in motion a visual rhetoric conditioning a viewer's experience of the city, defining a sacred threshold and liminal space that carried visual memories from earlier Anatolian dynasties. Second, specific features of the mountain on which the necropolis is located evoke memories of the Persian royal rock-cut necropolis at Naqš-e Rostam and establish a visual connection with more prominent kings from whom the Mithridatids claimed descent.

Similarly, the topography and orientation of the 1st-century BCE royal Galatian necropolis at Karalar (Arık 1934; Coupry 1935) visually refer to prestigious precedents, as two of the three known tumuli are deliberately set in view of the older, 2nd-century BCE tumulus at the site. Furthermore, the tumuli are not only highly visible from the adjacent fortress/residential complex and surrounding territory, but are actually more visually prominent than any other construction at the site, including defensive construction. Such visibility forges connections with earlier, prominent historical figures and establishes a means by which the sovereign "commands" the surrounding territory. Several visible features of the tumuli, moreover, seem to have been intended to link visually the Galatian nobles with a specific Greek and Roman identity, legitimizing their authority and presence in the region.

Using a "place-based" archaeological approach highlights how the topographical and visual relationships propagated by the siting of each tomb established physical and visual continuity between generations of kings. These continuities allude to a shared elite visual culture that communicated cultural ties and reinforced political authority in the Hellenistic Mediterranean. My research moves beyond broad comparisons of tomb types (Fedak 1990), and joins a growing bibliography seeking to understand cultural identity and exchange in the ancient Mediterranean from a localized perspective (Gruen 2011; Mairs 2011). Analyzing the specific physical situation of funerary monuments serves to nuance more carefully the complex patterns of cultural exchange and identity construction in Hellenistic Anatolia.

Bibliography

Arık, R. O. 1934. "Karalar Hafriyatı." *Türk Tarih, Arkeologya, ve Etnografya Dergisi* 2:102-167.

- Canepa, M. 2014. "Topographies of Power: Theorizing the Visual, Spatial and Ritual Contexts of Rock Reliefs in Ancient Iran." In *Of Rocks and Water: Towards an Archaeology of Place*, ed. Ö. Harmanşah, 53-92. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Coupry, J. 1935. "Les Tumuli de Karalar et la sépulture du roi Déiotaros II." *Revue Archéologique* 6me serie 6:131-151.
- Fedak, J. 1990. *Monumental Tombs of the Hellenistic Age: A Study of Selected Tombs from the Pre-Classical to the Early Imperial Era*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Fleischer, R. 2005. "Zwei pontische Felsgraber des hohen Hellenismus mit monumentalen Inschriften." *Chiron* 35:273-284.
- Fleischer, R. 2009. "The Rock-tombs of the Pontic Kings in Amaseia (Amasya)." In *Mithridates VI and the Pontic Kingdom*, ed. J. M. Højte, 109-120. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Gruen, E. 2011. *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Harmanşah. 2015. Ö. *Place, Memory, and Healing: An Archaeology of Anatolian Rock Monuments*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mairs, R. 2011. "An 'Identity Crisis'? Identity and Its Discontents in Hellenistic Studies." In *Meetings between Cultures in the Ancient Mediterranean: Proceedings of the 17th International Congress of Classical Archaeology, Rome 22-26 Sept. 2008*, ed. M. Dalla Riva, 1-8. Rome.