Symbolic figures in Early Imperial Asia Minor. Reshaping of funerary architecture?

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Abstract

The Hellenistic tradition of funerary monuments in Early Imperial Asia Minor was based equally on both, the form and decoration of tomb monument. Figural decoration on panel reliefs or sarcophagi embodied political allegory and civic ideology together with the depiction of the deceased. Unfortunately, various free standing statues and mural paintings are nowadays consider lost, despite numerous references of ancient authors and epigraphic evidence. How much of funerary decoration should be understood in terms of traditional civic ideas of the Hellenistic world and how much in terms of Roman concept, is one of the most important issues related to the Roman sepulchral landscape in Anatolia. Early Imperial architectural forms followed hellenistic tradition while communicating Roman ideas through orientation and organization of space. Similar system of public honours that Greek cities bestowed upon their citizens and foreign benefactors in previous period (praise, crown, statue, prohedria, tafé demosia) was maintained. Architectural changes in western Asia Minor came about in the Augustan Age, reflecting the major political transformation of the empire.

Key Words: citizens- démos- hero cult- mausoleum- temple tomb

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1. Introduction

A fundamental change in the political culture could be recognized already in the Hellenistic period, since important contribution of Hellenistic polis may be seen in kind of social and political organizations, which has become known as regimes of the notables. What is more, position of the civic elite in the Late Hellenistic period presumably did not differ essentially from the Late Classical period. Construction of public building came about as a result of extensive negotiations between démos and the civic elite. Epigraphic documentation indicates that boulé and démos were still deciding on the kind of issues that had been on the agenda centuries earlier (Van Nijf and Alston 2011, 1-27). Furthermore, epigraphic and literary evidence suggest that many buildings were in part publically funded, although the structures often bore the name of the individual who provided the remainder of the funds. Awareness of citizenship still remained an important factor, as a formal symbol of autonomy and independence. Additional growth of honorific monuments took a place when Greek world had become part of the Roman Empire. Imperial freedmen and people with close ties to Rome were largely responsible for new public building programs, and therefore Rome can be seen as the motivating force behind the transformation of this space.

Significant Roman influence in the western Asia Minor can be seen in cities which had the closest ties to Rome and the greatest population of Roman citizens. Aphrodisias had long maintained good relations with Rome but remained a small polis until the late first century B.C. The monumentalization of the city began with the building activities promoted by Iulius Caesar’s freedman Zoilos, who became responsible for the planning of much of the civic centre and many of early monumental projects of the city. When he died in 28 B.C., a large monument to his honour was established by locals (Smith 1993, 4-13). Interesting monument of the Late Hellenistic political allegory provided representation of civic ideology, showing traditional motifs such as dexiosis or public crowning. Chronologically belongs at the boundary between the Late Republican and Early Augustan period, culturally both to the Hellenistic east and Roman west. Similar characteristics might be seek by so called Tomba Bella at Hierapolis, a monumental heroon with elevated sarcophagus visible from exterior, in order to exalt the illustrious personality of the deceased and his ancestors. Typologically belongs to temple tombs with double storey
structure, characteristic for Roman funeral monuments of whole Asia Minor. The Iulio-Claudian date was confirmed by comparison of its architectural type with those attested on contemporary monuments in this area. Figurative frieze on the chest shows the deceased and divine figures identified as abstract personifications. The scene seems to belong to a civic rather than cultic or mythological context. The deceased was depicted in typus popular in funerary and portrait art of the Hellenistic period, while iconographicaly figures can be traced back even to the last quarter of fourth century B.C. Both examples show to what extent the Hellenistic tradition was crucial in the development of subsequent memorial and funeral monuments.

Fig. 1 Sarcophagus of so-called Tomba Bella at Hierapolis, Archaeological museum of Hierapolis (photo: Erik Hrnčiarik).
Fig. 2 Elevated chamber tomb - tradition of mausoleion type in the Roman period. Gümüşkesen, Milas (photo: Ivan Kuzma).
Fig. 3 Roman maussolleia of Imbrogon - tradition of the previous building types. Demircili (photo: Lucia Novakova).

2. Tombs and honorific monuments

The monument of C. Iulius Zoilos consisted of series of marble frieze panels with depiction of the deceased surrounded by deities and personifications, while each figure was identified by an adjacent inscription. Numerous divinities and personifications were attested, evoking variety of political, religious, honorific and funerary settings (Aión, Andreia, Areté, Démos, Minos, Mnémé, Pistis, Polis, Roma and Timé). The relief probably decorated podium base of the tomb. Panels show that monument was square in plan, with a frieze of four or five
panels per side. The superstructure might be reconstructed as an open pteron. The frieze of a fully preserved side is divided into two scenes, each with three figures. Zoilos is flanked by Timé and Andreia, presenting a shield to him, while he is crowned by Timé. Crowning as one of publicly displayed honour appears in the second scene where Zoilos, standing by Démos with dexiosis gesture, is crowned by Polis. Only two panels can be positioned with certainty on the remaining two sides of the monument. Roma and possibly Pistis can be placed there in a scene representing Zoilos´s Loyalty to Rome. Aión and Mnémé can symbolise the Eternity of Zoilos´s memory, which is common allegory of the Hellenistic funeral monuments. Position of some figures (Minos, Areté) remain uncertain (Smith 1993, 14-23).

The tomb in Hierapolis featured an inaccessible podium and a ionic pronaos with columns in antis. On the upper storey a Corinthian pronaos led to a wide cella with monumental sarcophagus. The tomb featured a sloping roof with marble tympana on both sides. On sarcophagus are recognizable numerous divine figures without religious attributes and slightly larger size when compared to depiction of the deceased (Romeo 2011, 193-210). The frieze is divided into several scenes, similarly to Zoilos monument. All allegories can be understood in the Greek and Roman complexion as well, but representations of civic virtue lack specific attributes. Without inscriptions their interpretation depends on the context. Male figure is crowned by figure, which corresponds to the Late Hellenistic typology of Tyché, honouring a prominent citizen. Male figure can be interpreted as Démos, half-draped according to the classical scheme. Both figures could be an allusion to communities, to which the deceased belonged: Rome and Hierapolis. Civic virtues could also signal that tomb owner enjoyed status of Roman citizenship.

Civic pride and celebration of the Hellenistic past did not conflict with close relationship with Rome. Démos is being crowned by Synkletos, personification close to Roman senate, while veiled Boulé is crowned by Gerousia. A highly fragmentary side appears to celebrate loyal relationship between Hierapolis and Rome. A female figure may be seen as Pistis, personification of loyalty towards Rome, known also from Zoilos frieze. Diademed characters can be interpreted as royal ancestors from whom the deceased was proud to claim descent. The recollection of illustrious progonoi was a popular feature in decrees honouring prominent citizens. Royal ancestors were sometimes represented on funerary monuments as
well. Other figures can be interpreted as personification of personal virtues. Areté, virtue of deceased was often associated with Mnémé, eternal memory of the deceased, understood in both, heroic and funerary context. Both are known also from the Zoilos frieze.

3. Settings and public displays

In both cases, depiction and gestures of symbolic figures on Zoilos relief and sarcophagus in Hierapolis, indicate much older tradition. Personification of social unit remained an important part of the Roman propaganda in visual art of following periods. The importance of these symbols and the scope of their applicability in diverse spheres was almost to the same extent as in the Greek art. The civic virtues, connected to the political conspects as Polis, Démos or Boulé, formed official iconography of public monuments in the Classical and the Hellenistic period. Analysis of political institutions or values, and their personified depiction, is generally based on official documents with relief decoration, votive reliefs, free standing monuments and statues, mostly preserved as Roman copies, testified by epigraphic and literally sources, glyptics and numismatic finds, mainly from south-western Anatolia and Levant. Important stage of symbolic imagery can be observed in the arts of the Early Classical Greece, when use of humanized characters in non-mythological but meaningful context began to appear (Smith 1999, 128-41).

Although ideas with political connotations are among the personifications found already in the Archaic period, they were largely confined to traditional mythological scenes and were rarely shown in political contexts. In the Early Classical period artists began to illustrate more personifications in non-mythological scenes, either alone or with other figures. Depiction of Polis in the semblance of ageless women on Zoilos monument and sarcophagus from Hierapolis correspond to the Late Classical and Hellenistic canon. While Polis was mostly depicted as ageless female figure, in Athens another form of display was created. The male character was used as symbol of People (Démos), or legislative unites (Boulé, Phylé), representing Athenian citizens. Close connection of Polis with male figure of Démos reflects ambivalent character of Greek art. Démos as symbol of People took a leading role in later iconography of official documents with relief decoration and represented an integral part of community, or even character of Polis itself.
Display of conspects were less popular than deities, however their image was slightly bigger than of humans. Artists used them for explanation scenes, while their extension points to a strong link between public art and political ideology (Smith 1999, 128-41). Modification appeared in the image of Tyché, understood as Polis counterpart, attested on the tomb of Hierapolis. The worship of Tyché as city goddes developed since the fourth century B.C. onwards. Identification of Tyché with the Fortune of polis was characteristic for public documents of Athens. Agathé Tyché was worshiped with Zeus and later obtained her male equivalent-Agathos Daimón. Again, ambiguity of the Greek art appeared. The couple of Agathé Tyché and Agathos Daimón (Good Fate and Spirit of the city) were cherished in numerous poleis, even if loosing political sovereignty. The earliest depiction of Tyché as symbol of city was attested in Cilician coinage (Levante 1993, 52-180).

Dexiosis and crowning gesture were well known from previous periods, too. Honorific decrees depicted Démos rewarding a citizen with honorific crown. The oldest representation were dated to the second quarter of the fourth century B.C. Such documents with crowning scene were characteristic for the whole Hellenistic period, especially from south-western Anatolia. Depiction of an individual, instead of Démos, in the form of a statue or a statue and an altar also appeared (Isager and Karlsson 2008, 39-52). Tradition of rewarding people of power within polis was common in Eastern Greek poleis and presumably reflected the enhancement of the following ruler cult. Origin of tituli memoriales, frequently attested in Roman imperial times, can be seek here, too. Honorific wreath in its classic form represented type of public honor, which was also attested by epigraphic evidence, while annual bringing wreaths on the grave was confirmed as a public act. Political allegories of Pistis- Fides, Synkletos/ Gerousia-Senatus reflect a concern of the Roman propaganda in the art, evident also in the following period. Representation of personal virtues was visible on the later memorial building in adjacent region. Library of Celsus in Ephesus, which served also as mausoleum, is one of examples.
4. Civic elite and benefactors

The tendency to highlight certain members of polis can be seen since the beginning of the Archaic period. Further depiction and even heroisation of citizens was rooted in the post-Classical communities, where legitimizing state power and promoting shared awareness took place. Particular significance had the Greek cities in western Anatolia, where honorification of citizens frequently happened during their life-time. Close connection of hero cult and public affairs is presumable since poleis were becoming established in their essential elements. Erecting public memorials is characteristic for local communities in Lycia and Caria as well. Such tradition could contribute to the development of ruler cult, even if enhanced by Greek poleis and koina in this area. Honorification process can be reconstructed by written sources, epigraphic material and abundant presence of honorific statues, preserved mostly in parts. Citizens of the Greek cities after the Classical age still used religion to construct their cultural identities and political experience, while many of the features of traditional polis religion survived in a modified way. In the following period locals with Roman citizenship and close ties with Rome were awarded by traditional public honours.

Among public rewards one marked as most valuable was the setting up of honorific statue of the benefactor. The practice of setting up statues to commemorate deeds by humans appeared even in the Archaic period, and continued in following periods, where funerary connotation is more obvious. The honorific statue emerged as cognizable and rapidly widespread genre in the Late Classical period, reflecting socio-historical events and an effort to maintain political apparatus. From the Late Hellenistic period onwards marble honorific statues (άγαλμα) for a human being, often with a cultic connotation or in the context of cultic honours for a benefactor, appeared in this area (Ma 2013, 6-11). The recipient of statue honours were deserving individuals as foreign benefactors (kings, royal officials, powerful officers of external powers) or local citizens (military officers, politicians, statesmen, advocates, magistrates, or generous donors). However, this statuescape of Greek cities has disappeared, when most of the bronze statues were melted down. Only in exceptional cases marble statues can be identified as honorifics, thanks to association with inscribed bases and specific sites in public spaces.
In the Hellenistic times, the role of benefactors grew in an intense way. Heroization of the average dead also becomes a widespread custom, including the transfer of heroic iconography (Herda 2013, 67-122). The tendency to highligh an individual within communities can be recognizable. Public buildings were frequently erected in a former burial ground, incorporating the graves of local heroes. Burials in bouleuteria and other public buildings were a rare honour, comparable to a grave in the agora, which was often reserved only for founder of polis. The reason for integrating the hero graves into civic buildings was not only matter of lacking space in the course of progressing urbanisation or out of pure respect for the dead. Such location of tomb was one of the highest honours polis could give to very few persons, the exeptional members of society. Bouleteria were well known as place for heroic cults, organized by local burial and cult associations in western Anatolia. Such associations, called temenitai or temenizontes, are attested in several inscriptions from the necropoleis of Miletos as well as from the city itself (Schörner 2011, 223-230).

For better understanding of public heroisation within Greek cities, a phenomenon of honouring and promoting the individuals need to be considered. Cities honoured their citizens yet in the fourth century B.C. and such honours were granted predominantly for military services. This trend had continued, when cities used statues as public honours for local benefactors, citizens who led civic troops to freedom and victory, or simply who fought for their father-land, statesmen, generous lenders or even givers of funds. Honorific statues were often mentioned in literary sources, while their nature was usually specified in the epigraphic material. Towards the end of the third and the early second century B.C., statuary honours grew more common, especially for civic benefactors, some of whom accumulated statues given by numbers of cities across the Hellenistic world. This change in civic culture brought modifications in the honorific statue custom, such as increase in the number of statues granted by the cities, honouring also family members of benefactors, setting up multiple portraits to an individual or honorands themselves paying their honorific statues. In parallel, and in the absence of royal masters over the Hellenistic cities, statuary honours continued to be used for Roman officials, often statuefied alongside their family members (Ma 2013, 49-55).
Fig. 4 Temple tomb - popular type of Roman funerary monuments in the whole Anatolia. Demircili (photo: Lucia Novakova).
Fig. 5 Mezgit Kalesi. Temple tomb dated back to the second or first half of the third century A.D. (photo: Erik Hrnčiarik).

5. Intramural burials and heroa

Wealthy local magnates based in their cities, usually aristocrats with Roman citizenship, acting in their patron’s interest, received burial in agoras or gymnasia as new founders. Similar examples are known from almost every part of western Anatolia. C. Iulius Theopompos of Cnidus, mythographer, local leader and friend of Caesar, who secured the freedom for Cnidus, received two statues in the city centre. Honors including a tomb in gymnasion are documented for his son Artemidoros at Cnidus. Intramural burial is attested for C. Iulius Hybreas, the rhetor, who lead city’s resistance to Labienus at Mylasa. At Thyateira C. Iulius Xenon was honoured with public tomb as benefactor, heros and founder of city. The same pattern can be seen among Greek supporters of Pompey and his son,
Sextus Gnm. Pompeius Theophanes of Mytilene or Demetrios of Gadara (Smith 1999, 8-9). At the same time private heroisation of the deceased continued, while losing religious and cult significance. Citizens may claim supernatural character for their ancestors and stress excellence and venerability of their family members in this manner.

Agorae and gymnasia were favoured locations for commemorating old and new heroes in the late Hellenistic and Roman Asia. These were locations utilised to honour heroes in the remote Classical past (Halicarnassus, Ephesus, Magnesia ad Meandrum, Priene). Since heroa in western Anatolia are understood more in the terms of function and significance rather than their building type, they can be distinguished by the location of tomb. Until Mausoleum of Halicarnassus and other dynastic monuments of Late Classical period became a prototype for temple tombs of the following periods. For better understanding of this process development of burials within inhabited area should be considered. The beginning of the phenomenon of intramural burial in ancient Greece went back to the Early Archaic period, when a clear distinction between the city of the living and necropolis can be observed. The reasons for allowing the tomb within the city were very broad and changed during the centuries. First of all the burial place on the agora was reserved for the founder of the polis. Besides that other personalities could be honoured for their lifetime achievement, such as athletes, authors, statesmen or generals. Such grave of a city founder, as well as that of other kinds of heroes, was exempted from the idea of ritual pollution.

The oldest known intramural interment in ancient Greece was attested by literary (Paus. 1.44.1) and epigraphic sources in the case of Orsippos burial in the agora of Megara (Schörner 2014, 152-60). Agora was the most prominent place for a grave and such location is very exceptional. Growth of such burials can be observed in the Hellenistic period. Numerous examples from western Anatolia region demonstrates connection of hero and older ancestor cult. Some epigraphic and literary testimonies even confirmed the segregation of the agora into the male and female (Mantas 2009, 203-12). In the Late Hellenistic period a female religious society applied for permission to erect a statue in honour of the priestess Kleidike in the male agora of Cyzicus, so she could stand next to the statues of her father and brother, well known local politicians (Habicht 2005, 93-100). The oldest grave within the city walls in western Anatolia – except the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus – was indicated with the Pisidian tomb in the agora of Termessos. The
Pisidians, non-Greek people of Anatolian origin, had practiced a kind of self- 
Hellenization since the fourth century B.C., a phenomenon known also from 
Lycia and Caria. It is conceivable that they assumed honouring a prominent 
citizen with the great privilege of the burial at the city centre (Schörner 2011, 
223-30). However, graves as well as cenotaphs, of city founders were 
discovered in agoras of western Greek colonies in southern Italy (Herda 
2013, 67-122). There does not exist any Greek written source prohibiting 
burials within the cities. The intraurban grave, a cult-place honoured a 
couple of centuries in the middle of the agora, offered several possibilities for 
self-expression by the poleis: there could be a new burial within an old grave, 
or making a copy of an old inscription.

Fig. 6 Heroon of Thermessos in Pisidia, located within the city walls 
(photo: Lucia Novakova).
6. Conclusion

During the time after establishing the Roman province Asia and during the Roman Empire in the East the intra-urban burial was a new a special honouring given by the polis, but the importance in relation to the creation of identity for the city changed (Schörner 2011, 223-230). The prominent tombs of this time may at first sight simply reflect a traditional habit of honouring benefactors, being in line with the retrospective cultural atmosphere. New significant pattern after the first century A.D. is the linking of the tomb with important public donations of the deceased. A number of hybrid constructions left their mark on the development of intra-urban burials, combining a variety of in part complementary, in part also contradictory features, of which the tomb proper was only one aspect. Elevated high above the ground, the superstructure could not be accessed and it was therefore impossible to use this building as a space for rituals commemorating the deceased (Bern 2013, 231-142). Despite numerous examples epigraphic evidence attesting term heros (gr. ἥρως), not so much were connected with religious life as much with political statement, ideology and society classification. Similar tendencies are visible yet in previous periods (Mantas 2009, 203-12).

Under the Roman rule there was not the same impression of difference between poleis, yet each Greek polis wished to express its urban identity in contra distinction to the Roman imperium by demonstration of its own antiquity (Schörner 2014, 151-162). The creation of identity within the city came about through a common act of worship and remembrance of the honoured dead; otherwise it was about the drawing of a distinction between one polis and its neighbours. Despite the fading of cities in mainland Greece, western shores of Anatolia continued to flourish economically and culturally in the Early imperial period. Economic centres were places, where the phenomenon of benefaction thrived, while members of city representatives class were already established in the Late Hellenistic period.

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